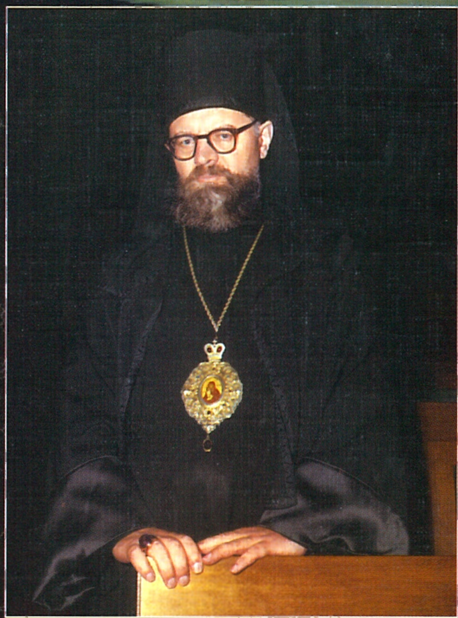




# CESLAUS SIPOVICH

The First Belarusian Catholic Bishop in the 20th Century

1914–1981

by

Alexander Nadson

**Alexander Nadson**

# BISHOP CESLAUS SIPOVICH

## 1. The First steps

Ceslaus Sipovich was born on 8 December 1914 into a farming family at Dziedzinka, a small village in the north-western corner of Belarus which at that time formed part of the Russian Empire. As the result of changes brought about by the First World War and the Russian Revolution, the territory of Belarus was partitioned in March 1921 by the Treaty of Riga between its neighbours. Its western regions came under the Polish rule, and the eastern part became the Belarusian Soviet Republic, a constituent part of the Soviet Union. It was a cynical deal which paid no regard to the interests of Belarusians. The Poles who were in a stronger position than the Soviets, but who had only recently regained their independence, were afraid of having a large ethnic minority within their borders and carved up for themselves only that portion of Belarus which they thought they could easily assimilate. In the words of the Polish politician Stanislaw Grabski, they "cut out the Belarusian abscess".

The great majority of Belarusians (over 70 percent) were Orthodox, with a sizable minority (about 25 percent) Roman Catholics, most of whom lived in the western regions which after 1920 came under Polish rule. The Orthodox were mainly descendants of Catholics of Byzantine rite or, as they were known, Greek Catholics or Uniates. In 1839 the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus was suppressed by the Russian authorities and forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. Some of the Greek Catholics, in order to safeguard their faith, secretly managed to change their rite, thus increasing the number of Roman Catholics in Belarus. It is hard to say whether the ancestors of Ceslaus Sipovich were among them, but his parents, Vincent (1877-1957) and Jadviha, née Tychka (1890-1974) were both Catholics of Roman rite. They had eight children, of whom five – four boys and one girl, – survived, Ceslaus being the eldest. The life of a Belarusian peasant was not easy, and children were expected at an early age to start to help their parents with the farm work. Ceslaus was no exception, and from that time on, throughout his entire life, he retained a love and respect for manual labour, especially that of a farmer. According to his younger brother Peter, the decisive influence in the formation of his character was his mother. Although without any formal education, she knew how to instil in her children the love of their native language. She was endowed with a lively intellect and considerable poetical talent. Her songs and poems were learnt by others by heart, thus becoming part of local village folklore.

According to the testimony of Bishop Sipovich himself, he felt an inclination towards the priesthood from early age. The inclination became firm resolution when in November 1928 he joined the "juniorate", a kind of monastic "minor seminary" for potential candidates for religious life at the monastery of the Belarusian Marian Fathers in the nearby town of Druia (pronounced "Drooia") on the river Dzvina, which marked the frontier between the Polish Republic and Latvia. The boys continued to attend school, but were subject to monastic discipline under the supervision of a priest of the Congregation, allowances being made for their age and necessity of study.

The first year in the "juniorate" for Sipovich was spent in preparation for entering the High School (the so called "gimazjum") run by Marian Fathers. It was a

fee-paying coeducational school, – a feature rather unusual at that period, – with fees varying according to whether children came from the families belonging to the Druia parish or from elsewhere. There were also non-Catholic pupils, in particular children of Druia Jewish families, but their fees were accordingly higher. Apart from day pupils there were also boarders. The boy boarders lived at the monastery under the supervision of a priest. The boarding house for girls was run by sisters of the Eucharist, a female congregation founded by Blessed George Matulewicz, of whom more below.

The idea of a Belarusian monastic foundation in Druia came from Blessed George Matulewicz (1871-1927), who was Bishop of Vilna in the years 1918-1925. A Lithuanian, conscious of his national identity, he spent most of his life in Poland, where he was highly respected as an exemplary priest, full of apostolic zeal and deeply concerned with social justice. In 1909 he secretly joined the Marian Fathers, a religious congregation founded in the 17th century in Poland, but which at that time was on the point of extinction because of the policy of the Russian government which did not allow Catholic religious orders to accept new candidates. Matulewicz became Superior General and gave the Marian Congregation a new constitution, adapted to the necessities of the time. He also established a novitiate in Fribourg in Switzerland, far from the eyes of the Russian secret police. After the retreat of the Russians during the First World War, the Marian Fathers came into the open and established their houses in Poland and Lithuania. In December 1918 Matulewicz became Bishop of Vilna. This city was a bone of contention between newly independent Lithuania and Poland, and became eventually part of the latter. The situation of Matulewicz was delicate. A Man of God, he wanted to be the pastor and father to all members of his flock, and maintained that his field of action was the Kingdom of Christ, and not human politics. Unfortunately the fact that he was Lithuanian made him suspect in the eyes of the Polish authorities and nationalistically disposed clergy. What angered them most, however, was the bishop's attitude towards Belarusians, who formed the largest part of the faithful of his diocese. Belarusians were in a difficult position. According to the Polish policy of an "ethnically-uniform state", they were due for assimilation. The Catholic Church was expected to play an important role in this process of assimilation. In the words written in 1923 by the representative of the Polish government in Vilna Province, Walerian Roman, the Catholic Church was expected to be the most powerful factor "in polonising the local population with hitherto undefined national identity". Matulewicz could not permit such a blatant use of the Church for political ends. But he could do little to prevent it. His efforts to satisfy the legitimate religious demands of Belarusians brought accusations of encouraging "Belarusian nationalism".The establishment of a strong Belarusian religious centre in the form of a House of Belarusian Marian Fathers seemed to be the best solution in the circumstances. This was done in May 1924 in Druia. The first superior was Father Andrew Tsikota (1891-1952), an exemplary priest and able administrator. He was soon joined by other Belarusian priests, among them Father Joseph Hermanovich (1890-1978), a well known Belarusian poet and the favourite teacher of Ceslaus Sipovich. Marian Fathers were also in charge of the Druia parish, which covered several neigbouring villages and hamlets. The monastic church of the Holy Trinity served as the parish church. At the beginning of 1930 the parish had 5024 parishioners, of which 3274 were Belarusians. The remaining 1754 comprised

206 members of the Polish frontier guard unit, 34 Lithuanians, 3 Latvians, 2 Russians and 1509 Poles (including 1163 polonised Belarusians)[1].

Despite the fact that the overhelming majority of the faithful in the Druia parish were Belarusians, the Marian Fathers had to exercise considerable moderation in their work, hoping thereby not to antagonise the authorities. Thus schooling in their high school was conducted in Polish, and Belarusian was not even taught as a subject. In fact pupils were forbidden to speak among themselves in Belarusian during the breaks. Similarly, in the parish church two out of three sermons every Sunday were preached in Polish, and only one, at vespers, in Belarusian. At the same time the fathers never made any secret of the fact that they were Belarusians; they spoke Belarusian among themselves and with the faithful, and used that language to teach the catechism to peasant children who in any case did not understand Polish. But even this discreet attitude failed to placate the Polish civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The Belarusian Fathers were subjected to all kinds of harassment, unfounded accusations and attacks in the Polish press. The situation deteriorated after 1925, when Poland signed a concordat (treaty) with the Holy See. According to the terms of the concordat the episcopal see of Vilna was raised to the dignity of archbishopric and became the centre of the new metroplitan province. In practice this meant that in the Polish-Lithuanian quarrel about Vilna the Holy See recognised the claims of the former. The position of Bishop Matulewicz became untenable. In July of that year he tendered his resignation and was replaced eventually in 1926 by Romuald Jalbrzykowski (1876-1955), a Pole who showed neither sympathy with, nor understanding of, the needs of Belarusian faithful in his diocese. The Belarusian fathers in Druia soon began to feel the change. Their offer in 1926 to extend their pastoral work was rejected. In 1929 Jalbrzykowski appointed a special commission to investigate their various alleged misdeeds, including their alleged attempted poisoning of Jozef Borodzicz, a Polish priest, originally from the diocese of Vilna, but since 1912 belonging to the Italian diocese of Ventimiglia and residing in San Remo. Every summer he spent his "holidays" in the Vilna diocese where, with the tacit consent of civil and ecclesiastical authorities, he conducted a campaign in defence of "Polish borderlands" which according to him were in peril. As a special target he singled out the Belarusian Marian Fathers in Druia. In June 1929 he made an attempt, allegedly with the permission of Archbishop Jalbrzykowski, to start building a new church in Druia in opposition to the already existing parish church. Pressed by Tsikota, Jalbrzykowski had to admit in writing that he had given no permission to Borodzicz, and ordered the latter to leave Druia immediately. At the same time, however, he appointed a commission to investigate Borodzicz’s accusations against the Marian Fathers. The commission was compelled to concede their absurdity, but the true reason for all this disagreeable affair was made manifest by the subsequent demand by Jalbrzykowski that Druia should divest itself of its Belarusian character and admit two Polish priests. Father Andrew Tsikota, in his comments to the Superior General of the Congregation of Marian Fathers on the findings of the commission, put it succinctly when he said: "The only crime, which we freely acknowledge, is that we are Belarusians". In 1930 Belarusian sermons in the Druia church were abandoned under threat of violence on the part of fanatical Polish nationalists. The decision to stop preaching in Belarusian was praised by Jalbrzykowski, as well as by the Polish Marian Father, Kazimierz Bronikowski, who early in 1930 was sent to Druia by the Superior General Peter Buchys "to investigate

---

[1] The statistics was compiled by Father Vitalis Khamionak on the basis of the visitation of parishioners’ homes during the Christmas period 1929-30.

the nationalism of the Druia Marian fathers, which nationalism is said to disturb the peace of Druia parishioners"[2]. In 1929 Father Vitalis Khamionak was dismissed from the post of teacher of religion in the Druia schools, and in his place was appointed a Polish diocesan priest, who, in the words of Bronikowski, "began to undo the Belarusian work of Father Vitalis by telling the children stories with religious content from Polish history".

About the same time the Belarusian Marian community in Druia had been weakened by the departure of some of its members for missionary work among Russians in Harbin in Manchuria. They were victims of the then fashionable policy of "conversion of Russia". According to its proponents, after the fall of Communism in the Soviet Union (in which they did not doubt) the Russian Orthodox Church would be weak and demoralised. This would present a unique opportunity for the Catholic Church to extend her frontiers eastwards right to the heart of Russia. The most prominent exponent of this idea was Bishop Michel d'Herbigny, a learned French Jesuit, Rector of the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, who knew how to gain the confidence of the Pope Pius XI. In 1925 a special Commission "Pro Russia" was established, first as part of the Congregation for Eastern Churches, and from 1930 as an independent department of the Vatican, directly responsible to the Pope. Like a new Napoleon, d'Herbigny was preparing the spiritual conquest of Russia by amassing his troops on the borders of the Soviet Union. One such bridgehead was the Jesuit House in Albertyn in Western Belarus which was then under Polish rule. At the same time the affairs of the Eastern (Byzantine) rite in Western Belarus were placed under the jurisdiction of the Commission "Pro Russia". This fact dismayed Belarusians who saw their hopes for a revival of their Greek Catholic Church dashed. It also antagonised Poles who considered Belarus to be their "sphere of influence" and did not take kindly to the idea of Belarusians being russified by... the Vatican.

Another place which attracted the attention of Commission "Pro Russia" was Harbin, the capital city of the Chinese province of Manchuria. Out of a population of half a million nearly one third were Russians, mostly refugees from the Communist regime in their country. This was the largest compact Russian community outside Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church was well organised, with one archbishop, two bishops and some 250 priests. For d'Herbigny it must have seemed the ideal place to start missionary efforts.

Matulewicz died early in 1927 and was succeeded as Superior General of Marian Fathers by his friend and companion Francis Buchys (1872-1951). A Lithuanian, he spent many years before the First World War in St Petersburg, first as a student and later as professor of Fundamental Theology and Vice-Rector of the Catholic Theological Academy. It was there that he became attracted to the idea of

---

[2] "Agitur de investigatione nationalismi Marianorum Drujensium, qui nationalismus dicebatur nocere paci parochianorum Drujensium)". Father Kazimierz Bronikowski, Polish Provincial General of the Marian fathers, at the request of Buchys made an extraodrdinary visitation of Druja from 15 February to 16 April 1930. The report of the visitation consisting of 25 typewritten pages in Polish, was not presented to Buchys till 10 November 1930. It was entitled "Sprawozdanie z wizytacji nadzwyczajnej w Drui na zlecenie Jego Excellencji Najdostojniejszego Ojca Generala". Before the end of the visitation, on 3 March 1930, Bronikowski wrote to Buchys: "For the sake of peace...the Druja Fathers, after long deliberations at their meetings, without my participation and insistence, decided to abandon Belarusian sermons at Vespers... If I had any doubts, then they disappeared with shame because of this their Catholic magnanimity". Father Thomas Padziava in his unpublished work "Ojciec Andrzej Cikoto (Father Andrew Tsikota) (a typescript copy in the F. Skaryna Library in London), writes that according to Father Vitalis Khamionak, Belarusian sermons were abandoned at the insistence of Father Bronikowski...

"conversion of Russia". To the end of his life he was unwilling to concede that Belarusians were a separate nation. On 11 December 1930 in the report to d'Herbigny of his conversation with the secretary of the Polish embassy to the Holy See he wrote that "White Russians (*i.e.* Belarusians) and Little Russians (*i.e.* Ukrainians) are all Russians: the (Russian) emperors of old confirmed this in the enumeration of their titles"[3]. With ideas of this kind it was almost inevitable for him to become a firm supporter of the Commission "Pro Russia". He sensed in d'Herbigny a kindred spirit, while the latter found it convenient to use him by entrusting him with various tasks to accomplish. It did not take much time for him to become a d'Herbigny man. On 18 April 1929 he wrote to Father Abrantovich: "Father Bishop d'Herbigny is really favourably disposed towards you, Druia, and towards me. In the present circumstances, considering our actual needs, this cannot be a matter of indifference to us. In all circumstances he is a dignitary worthy of respect and a valiant worker for a great cause". Abrantovich, who was at that time already in Harbin, perhaps could have done with a slightly less favourable disposition from this "dignitary worthy of respect"... One of the first acts of d'Herbigny in 1930, after the Commission "Pro Russia" had become an independent department in the Vatican, was the procurement of episcopal dignity of Byzantine rite for his protegé, and his appointment as Apostolic Visitor for Russians in Western Europe. It was obviously a reward for services rendered, for, as the subsequent events showed, there was no need for such an appointment. Buchys, who was born and brought up in the Roman rite, was nearly 60 years old at the time of his consecration. Father Cyril Korolevski, a keen observer of the Vatican *Ostpolitik*, wrote about this new Byzantine rite bishop, who, incidentally, in order not to frighten the Orthodox Russians, began to use his second name, Peter, instead of the Latin Francis: "To provide greater solemnity in the divine service... d'Herbigny had Father Peter Buchys appointed Titular Bishop of Olympos... He scarcely knew the Byzantine liturgy, but d'Herbigny was sure that he would set out to it resolutely... He really remained a Roman Catholic in his mentality and practiced the 'biritual' system. He could never get accustomed to his new functions which were almost purely ornamental – and almost stopped exercising them"[4].

Long before these events took place, on 6 April 1927 Buchys wrote to the Commission "Pro Russia", – or rather to the Oriental Congregation in Rome, of which the commission then formed part, – stating that when Matulewicz was in Vilna, he "became convinced that our Belarusian members are a more apt instrument for the conversion of Russians than our brethren of any other nationality[5] . For this reason, although our Congregation already had in Poland a novitiate in Rasna, Archbishop Matulewicz, with the gracious consent of the Holy See, established in Druia, which is situated in the archdiocese of Vilna, another novitiate to prepare Belarusians for their special task". This statement raises the question whether Matulewicz was completely sincere with the Belarusians in regard to the aims of Druia. In his letter of 8 June 1923 to the Holy See, requesting permission to establish in Druia a Marian monastery and novitiate "for Belarusians, who in their majority are schismatics and till now have

[3] "Le blanc russes et les petits russes sont pourtant les russes. Les empereurs d'autrefois le reconnaissaient dans la nomenclature de leurs titres". *Conversation de Mr Stanislas Janikowski, I-er Conseiller de l'ambassade polonaise auprès du St Siège avec Mgr Pierre Bucys, évêque tit. d'Olympe du rite bizantino-slave*. Typescript copy in the F. Skaryna Library in London.

[4] Korolevski Cyril, *Metropolitan Andrew (1865-1944).* Transl. S. Keleher. Stauropegion, L'viv, 1993, p.329

[5] "persuasum habuit sodales nostros alborussos fieri posse ad convertendos russos instrumentum aptius quam confratres nostri cuiuscumque aliae nationis"

had no religious (institutions) of their own"[6], there is no mention of Russia or a special role for Druia in converting that country. On the other hand, on 19 April 1926 he wrote to the Polish Marian Father W. Jakowski: "With regard to the Belarusian question there is no need to worry. Our people (i.e. Belarusian Marian Fathers – *A.N.*) will surely do no harm to Poland. They are getting ready for mission work in Russia, and only wait for the opportune moment... Only a few of them will remain in Poland to take care of the parish and to prepare candidates for Russia"[7]. As far as Buchys was concerned, he had no doubts about the real aims for which Druia was established. On 17 August 1928 Fabian Abrantovich, the first of the Druia Fathers to be sent to Manchuria, wrote from Rome to Tsikota: "According to George (Matulewicz – *A.N.*) of blessed memory, Russia will not be converted by Poland or Lithuania, but by Belarus, i.e. Druia, which was founded by him specially for this purpose. Druia must justify his hopes, otherwise its existence has no sense, it will be closed... If we resisted and refused to go, that would be the end of us. That is roughly what I was told by Father General (Buchys – *A.N.*) before his departure...". A few years later, if one believes Buchys, it was no longer Matulewicz, but the Pope himself who set out the aims for Druia. In 1932 Tsikota asked Buchys that one of Druia clerics studying at the Russian College in Rome should be ordained in the Roman, and not the Byzantine rite. Buchys's answer on 13 April 1932 was quick and unequivocal: "Thomas Padziava with your consent was accepted in the Russian college on condition, that after completing his studies he would work for the conversion of Russians... Your request was contrary to the scope set out by the Holy Father for the Druia monastery". According to hisbiographers, d'Herbigny was adept in passing off his own wishes as those of the Pope. It looks like Buchys was not slow in adopting the methods of his protector.

Coming back to the year 1927, a little more than a month after he wrote his letter, Buchys received an an swer from the Oriental Congregation. In it he was asked to give his opinion on the suitability of Father Fabian Abrantovich, who was then a novice at Druia, for the post of "prelate for Russians of Byzantine Rite in Harbin, outside Poland".

Father Fabian Abrantovich (1884-1946) was considered one of the most prominent Belarusian priests of his time. Born in Navahradak which then belonged to the diocese of Minsk, he was educated in the Seminary and Imperial Catholic Theological Academy in Petersburg, and then Louvain University, where he obtained his doctor's degree in Philosophy. In 1915 he became a teacher in the Catholic Seminary in Petersburg and in 1918 – rector of the Seminary in Minsk until it was closed by the Communists in 1920. Incidentally, one of the teachers in the Minsk Seminary was Fr Tsikota, the future superior of Druia. After 1920 Abrantovich lived first in Navahradak and then in Pinsk. In 1925 Pinsk became the centre of a new diocese, comprising roughly those parts of Minsk diocese which fell within borders of the Polish state. It was there that he received for the first time the proposal to go to Harbin. By that time Abrantovich realised that there was no future for him in Poland. On the other hand the idea of leaving Belarus and going to Manchuria, and in particular abandoning the Roman rite, in which he was born and brought up, did not appeal to him. Thus it may be that the wish to avoid being sent to Harbin was one of the factors which made him decide to join the Marian Fathers in Druia. He reckoned without Buchys. In August 1927 Abrantovich finished his novitiate, and in December

---

[6] "pro alborussis, quae gens maxima pars schismatica hucusque nullos religiosos indigenos habet".

[7] Matulewicz Jerzy, *Listy Polskie*. Vol. I, Warsaw 1987, p. 178

was summoned to the Vatican Nunciature in Warsaw, where the proposal of going to Harbin was renewed. He was given a few months to settle his affairs, and in August 1928 was on his way to China. Incidentally it was generally assumed that Abrantovich, as head of the only Catholic "Ordinariat" (i.e. diocese) for Russians, would become a bishop. Instead, he received the grand but meaningless title of archimandrite, a kind of honorary abbot. When two years later Buchys became a bishop, the event did not pass unnoticed among Belarusians. Father Adam Stankievich wrote on 15 July 1930 to Father Uladyslau Talochka: "It would be interesting to know what Buchys will do now. Abrantovich probably did not suspect that he had a rival in his (i.e. Buchys's – *A.N.*) person". And he sums up the whole affair with a Russian proverb, which may be roughly translated as: "They gave me away in marriage without my knowing it; I was not even present".

At the end of 1927 there were seven priests in Druia, of whom one, Francis Charniauski, was still a novice. As soon as the news of Abrantovich's appointment to Harbin became known, he left Druia, not wishing, as he explained later, to finish up there too. In 1929 two clerics from Druia were sent to the newly opened Russian College in Rome, and three more in the following year. They were destined for work among Russians, but Druia was obliged to pay for their education. Thus Harbin became a heavy burden for Druia, preventing it from developing work among Belarusians. What had happened was exactly what Tsikota feared when he wrote on 28 July 1928 to Abrantovich: "If there (i.e. in Harbin – *A.N.*) must be a Marian establishment supported by Druia – and that is what the Poles think, for I cannot understand otherwise the words spoken to me by His Excellency the Archbishop of Vilna (i.e. Jalbrzykowski – *A.N.*), 'Offer yourselves for the conversion of Russia', – then I think that we are not obliged to make such a sacrifice, and God does not require it from us". Tsikota's suspicions that the Poles were among those responsible for sending Abrantovich away to Harbin, was indirectly confirmed by Buchys who in his letter of 18 April 1929 to the latter wrote: "Among the discontented was one who wished to send the Dear Father (i.e. Abrantovich – *A.N.*) as far as possible from Druia, and for this reason he supported your candidature". It is not fanciful to suppose that the "discontented one" was none other than Archbishop Jalbrzykowski.

The Poles had little sympathy with the aims and methods of the Commission "Pro Russia". However, Harbin presented them with an opportunity to remove some troublesome Belarusian priests who might prove an obstacle to their policy of poloning Belarusian Catholics.

The Commission "Pro Russia" itself had no interest in, or understanding of, the particular spiritual needs of Belarusians, and regarded them only as useful tools for the "conversion" of Russia. This was felt by many Belarusian priests who were concerned about the religious state of their people. One of them, Kazimier Kulak, wrote on 15 December 1931 to Buchys: "For the Union action to succeed it is essential that those who are supposed to benefit from this action, i.e. Belarusians and Ukrainians, had confidence in it. In the meantime this confidence is diminishing every day, and not because of the fear of polonisation and latinisation on the part of the Poles, but of russification from... Rome!... A group of well known Belarusian priests – 5 or 7 persons – were thinking of adopting the Eastern rite, joining one of the religious congregations – Basilians or Marians, – and starting together the work for the Union in our country. However, if there is no action Pro Alborussia, but only Pro Russia, then why bother? To be sent to convert the Chinese, while our own people are perishing under the onslaught of sects and atheism?"

Ironically, early in December 1927 the Druia Fathers were ready to start work in the Byzantine rite with the view of restoring the Greek-Catholic Church in Belarus.

Three priests were chosen initially for this project, namely Abrantovich, Charniauski (after he had finished his novitiate) and Hermanovich. With the appointment of Abrantovich to Harbin and the resignation of Charniauski, the project had to be abandoned. Tsikota wrote to Buchys on 7 January 1928: "This affair is very painful for our monastery and for the Church in our country. We are so few, and even what we have is taken away from us... There remains nothing for us, except getting ready for this task (i.e. Union work in Belarus – *A.N.*) in the future, leaving to the Most High and Good God, when it would please Him to call from among us other workers to His harvest".

It can be said that the events of 1928 marked the beginning of the decline of Druia. This, however, was not evident at the time to a 14-year-old boy who knew nothing about the politics and machinations behind the scenes. He might even have felt a sense of pride that it was Druia which had been chosen to play such an important part in the work of "conversion of Russia". At the same time the dignified deportment of the Belarusian Marian fathers in the face of Polish political pressure, and their dedication to their pastoral work seemed only to strengthen his affection and respect for them.

Life in the juniorate was not easy. Rise at 4 a.m., Mass, breakfast, school from 6.30 to 12.30, lunch, short recreation with manual work, preparation of lessons, supper, recreation, evening prayers and bed at 7.45 p.m. The conditions of life were spartan. The church was unheated and freezing cold in winter. Food was plentiful but simple. There was usually buckwheat porridge and tea for breakfast; lunch consisted of two courses, with dessert only on great feasts. After lunch recreation was usually spent in manual work such as chopping wood for heating in winter. There was not much free time, but boys did not seem to mind: most of them came from peasant families and were used to hard work.

On the whole, according to Sipovich, despite the hardships it was a happy time. This was to a large extent due to Father Joseph Hermanovich, a priest with a merry twinkle in his eyes. He joined the Marian Fathers in 1924, after ten years of pastoral experience in various parishes of the Vilna diocese, where he encountered strong opposition from the Polish clergy when he tried to preach in Belarusian and establish Belarusian schools. A man of friendly disposition and simplicity, he could be hard and uncompromising in defending the principles in which he believed, in particular when it came to the question of the legitimate rights of the Belarusian people. Hermanovich was a born teacher who, in the words of Ceslaus Sipovich, "knew how to educate boys, excite their interest, and especially how to make them love their native tongue"[8]. He was also a talented poet and writer, signing his works with the pen-name "Vintsuk Advazhny" or just the initials "V. A.". It was under these intials that his book of poetry, *Belaruskiia tsymbaly* (Belarusian Dulcimer) appeared in Vilna in 1933. In the preface to the book his great friend, Father Adam Stankievich, wrote: "It appears that V. A. is the only Belarusian writer who today, however much he might want to, cannot reveal his own name, and must hide under the above initials. Such are the socio-political circumstances in which we live"[9]. The circumstances referred to were the fact that many of Fr Hermanovich’s poems had a strong Belarusian patriotic character and might have been used by Polish nationalists

8 Ja. Vuchan, "Vintsuk Advazhny", *Konadni*, No.7, New York – Munich, 1963, p.93. (Ja. Vuchan – one of the pennames of Ceslaus Sipovich)

9 Ad. Stankiewic, "Ab zycci i tworstwie W.A."; in the book: W. A. *Bielaruskija cymbaly*, Vilna, 1933, p.V

against Druia, had they known that the author was a member of that community. The second reason was that most of the poems were initially published in the newspaper *Belaruskaia Krynitsa*. Founded by Catholic priests, but run by laymen, it incurred the displeasure of Archbishop Jalbrzykowski for its independent Belarusian character, the advocacy of closer cooperation with the Orthodox and social justice. In 1928 he forbade the faithful to read the paper, and the priests to write to, or in any way to cooperate with it on the grounds that the paper promoted religious indifferentism and... communism. The order was ignored by the faithful, but the priests were forced to comply, at least outwardly, for the fear of being suspended *a divinis*. Some of the more enterprising among them found a way round this senseless and unjust prohibition.

The years spent in Druia in close contact with Father Hermanovich were pobably the most formative period in the life of Ceslaus Sipovich. In 1932 this period ended abruptly when Father Hermanovich left Druia for Harbin on the orders of Buchys. More than thirty years later Bishop Sipovich remembered the moment of departure of his beloved teacher: "After so many years I cannot forget the sad and moving moment when we said goodbye to dear Father Joseph in Druia... Our hearts ached not only because of the departure of a man dear to us, who for many of us had become asecond father, but also because our country was losing another priest and patriot, with no one to take his place"[10].

On the occasion of his departure the Belarusian Catholic paper *Chryscijanskaja dumka* (Christian Thought) expressed the feelings of all Belarusian Catholics when it wrote: "On 14 May this year... another Marian father, Joseph Hermanovich, the prominent Belarusian priest and writer, left Druia for Harbin. Many well known Belarusians, as well as students, came to the railway station in Vilna to say good bye to Fr J. H. The parting was doubly sad: firstly because the journey is long and dangerous; and secondly because Fr J. H. was leaving for missions in a faraway country at the time when there is much missionary work to be done in Belarus which has been neglected for centuries"[11]. Father Hermanovich was accompanied to Harbin by a lay brother, Anthony Aniskovich.

The year 1932 marked another crisis in Druia: out of five students sent to the Russicum in Rome, three abandoned their studies and left Druia in an atmosphere of recriminations and mutual accusations. Extreme caution must be exercised in drawing any conclusions in such cases, but the general impression is that the main reason was the breakdown of communications between the young people and the superior, Father Andrew Tsikota.

The complex figure of Tsikota, the first Belarusian Marian Father, is central to the whole history of Druia. Opinions about him are divided. Most of them are positive. There even are some people who consider him to be the most faithful follower of blessed George Matulewicz. He was a man of unshakeable faith and sincere piety, a brilliant preacher and speaker, able organiser and administrator. According to eyewitnesses, he had an astonishing capacity for hard work, never wasted time, and slept no more than 4 hours a night. At table he showed great moderation, and consequently was thinner than the other fathers. But there are also some disturbing features. Dr Joseph Malecki, who was a boarder in Druia in 1920s, wrote that Tsikota always knew everything about the boys – boarders and members of the juniorate, – and was tireless in discovering their smallest transgressions. Father Thomas Padziava, who was one of the first pupils in Druia and entered the novitiate

---

10 Ja. Vuchan, *op. cit*. p.93

11 *Chryscijanskaja Dumka,* No.6, Vilna, 15.6.1932, p.6

in 1926, in his reminiscences about Father Tsikota is more explicit. According to him, Tsikota "was always exactly informed, one does not know how and by whom, about the whereabouts of each pupil and what was he doing there. He always appeared when he was least expected but where he was needed to forestall a dangerous situation. No boy succeded in writing a letter to a girl, or receive one from her, without such a ‘document’ falling immediately in the hands of Father Andrew. On entering the room he used to go directly the the place where this unfortunate work of youthful imagination was hidden, as if he had put it there himself. He reached unerringly to the pocket which contained the love letter"[12]. Father Padziava writes about it approvingly, but to an outside observer it may suggest something far from admirable... It seems that boys from poor families, who could not afford school fees, were required instead to do work in the monastery. Malecki was one such boy. He writes: "His (i.e. Tsikota’s – *A.N.*) attitude towards me was not the most friendly, because he thought that I was not working hard enough, while in my opinion I was working pretty hard; he often threatened me with demands for payment for school, which for me was not easy". Later Malecki wrote that he was able to finish school only thanks to the help of Father Hermanovich.

The first two decades of the 20th century were a period of Belarusian national revival, both political and cultural. The focal point was the newspaper *Nasha Niva* which appeared in Vilna from 1906 till 1915, when it fell victim of the First World War hostilities and was closed. The appearance of the great poets and writers, such as Ianka Kupala, Iakub Kolas, Maksim Bahdanovich, Ales Harun, Iadvihin Sh., and many other writers lead to the rapid development of modern Belarusian literary language. This process culminated in the appearance in 1918 of the first Belarusian Grammar, by B. Tarashkevich. It was followed in 1920 by Maksim Haretski’s History of Belarusian Literature which even npw retains iits value. Ten years earlier, in 1910, Vatslau Lastouski published his History of Belarus.

Belarusian Catholics, and in particular Catholic priests, played an important part in the Belarusian national revival. Of course, their primary concern was to defend the right of Belarusians, in the face of strong opposition from the Polish clergy, to hear the Message of Salvation in their native tongue. But there were also among them talented poets and writers. Such were Jan Siemashkievich (writing under the pen-name Janka Bylina), Alexander Astramovich (Andrej Ziaziula), Ildefons Bobich (Piotra Prosty) and the greatest of them all, Constantine Stepovich (Kazimier Svajak). Tsikota, while student of the Catholic Theological Academy in St Petersbourg in 1913-17, was a member of the Belarusian circle there alongside Adam Stankievich, Vincent Hadleuski, Anthony Niemantsevich, Viktar Shutovich, Michael Piatrouski and others. Some of them became known in 1920s and 30s for their contribution not only to religious but also to general national life. Unlike them, Tsikota seemed to keep in mind always article 180 of the Marian Constitution which forbids members "to be involved in any administrative, political or national activities... They must stand apart from and above all political and party affairs, and their concern must be the cause of Christ and the Catholic Church". However, in religious matters he was not slow to make his voice heard. Thus his signature figures under the letter of Belarusian priests of 18 May 1925 to the Conference of Polish Bishops on the problems of pastoral care of Belarusian Catholics in the Polish Republic. In November 1926 Tsikota, on behalf of all Druia fathers, presented a Memorandum to

[12] Tomasz Podziawo, *Ojciec Andrzej Cikoto,* p.22. A typescript revised version, made by the author after 1969 in London (the first version was writen in 1959 in Poland).

the Union Conference of Polish bishops of the Eastern provinces, outlining a plan for pastoral and missionary work among Belarusian population. The plan was rejected by all bishops present. As years went by, his time was taken more and more by the affairs of Druia and, later, the whole Marian Congregation. Consequently less was heard about him in the Belarusian community. It seems therefore that Tsikota's biographer Thomas Padziava was unfair to those whom he calls "Belarusian nationalists", who, according to him "formed a wall of silence around the person of Father Andrew"[13], apparently because Tsikota founded in Druia a Polish, and not Belarusian, school. Having said that, it must be stated that the Congregation of Marian Fathers was Tsikota's spiritual home. The following Christmas greeting to Abrantovich, written on 15 December 1937, sheds interesting light on his frame of mind: "I pray God that the monastic vows which were born together with Christ in the manger in Bethlehem, may become for you the source of light, strength and joy, and that you may find in them one hundred times more than in what you have left in the world". This loyalty to the Marian Congregation sometimes seemed to influence his judgements. Thus on 8 January 1928 he wrote to Buchys about Charniauski, who left Druia without finishing his novitiate: "Charniauski abandoned the novitiate of his own accord. Monastic life would be difficult for him. He lacks the spirit of piety, obedience, modesty; is attracted to secular life and does not show due caution when talking with women". It seems that all these flaws in Charniauski's character were suddenly discovered after he had decided to leave the Marian Congregation: only a few weeks earlier he had been proposed for an important and responsible job. Incidentally Father Charniauski died in 1979 in the United States at the ripe age of 85, respected and loved by all who knew him and experienced his goodness and generosity.

In short, Andrew Tsikota was a strong character who often inspired respect and admiration, but perhaps lacked the warmth of Hermanovich. His single-mindedness must have made it difficult for many people to get on with him.

Ceslaus Sipovich retained a strong admiration for Tsikota till the end of his life. It was his dream to write a book about him, for which he was collecting material for years. It may well be that his unquestioning loyalty to the Congregation of Marian Fathers, which sometimes clouded his generally sound judgments, was due to Tsikota's influence. Perhaps it was fortunate that in 1928, when Sipovich joined the juniorate, the man in charge of the education of youth was not Tsikota, but Hermanovich.

On 21 July 1933 at the General Chapter of Marian Congregation in Rome Tsikota was elected Superior General for the next six years. In normal circumstances Buchys would have been reelected for a second term, but he asked to be excused on the grounds that he would like to give more time to his work in the Commission "Pro Russia". Two months later, in October 1933, d'Herbigny fell into disgrace and was banned from Rome for the rest of his life. Buchys at that time was in the United States, and it seems that no one took the trouble to inform him about what had happened. Deprived of his protector, he became something of an embarassment: no one knew what to do with him. After six years in the wilderness, in 1939 he was again elected Superior General of the Marian Fathers and remained in this post almost to his death in 1951.

[13] *Op. cit.* p.24

After the fall of d'Herbigny, the Commission "Pro Russia" was stripped of practically all its powers and became a department of the Secretariat of State dealing only with the Roman (Latin) rite Catholics in the Soviet Union, while the affairs of Catholics of the Byzantine and other Eastern rites throughout the world were entrusted to the competence of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches.

While not denying Tsikota's outstanding qualities as organiser and administrator, his election seemed to have been a compromise between Poles and Lithuanians, neither of whom wished to see a member of the other group at the head of their Congregation. For the Poles the election of Tsikota presented an additional advantage, because as Superior General he had to reside in Rome. Thus by being promoted to the high post he was effectively removed from Druia. After his departure there remained in Druia only three priests, none of whom was considered capable to be the superior. A Polish Marian Father, Wladyslaw Lysik, was appointed to this post. Archbishop Jalbrzykowski had his way at last.

All these momentous events did not at first affect Ceslaus Sipovich who interrupted his studies for one year and on 1 August 1933, having "put off all worldly care", entered the novitiate of Marian Fathers. On 15 August 1934 he made his first monastic vows and then returned for another year to school to finish his secondary education. In autumn 1935 he was ready to begin his philosophical and theological studies in preparation for the priesthood. Thus began a new chapter in his life.

## 2. Vilna

The ancient city of Vilna (today Vilnius, capital of Lithuania) in the first half of the 20th century was a bone of contention between Poles and Lithuanians, each claiming it for their own. In fact the situation was more complex than that. In the 14-18th centuries the city was the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a multi-ethnic state, the two largest groups being Belarusians and Lithuanians. The official language was Belarusian. It was in Vilna that the first Belarusian printer Francis Skaryna produced in 1522 his famous prayer book for laymen, *Malaia podorozhnaia knizhka.* It was there that in 1588 the publishing House of the Mamonich brothers produced *Statut Velikoho Kniazhstva Litovskoho*, a code of civil and criminal law far in advance of the legal systems of other European countries. After a period of decline under Russians, in the early 20th century Vilna became the centre of the Belarusian National revival. Between the two world wars the city belonged to Poland, but, despite many difficulties, Belarusian national and cultural life flourished there. In particular there was a Belarusian High School, the only one in Western Belarus after the Polish authorities closed the Belarusian schools in other cities. Vilna University, founded in the 16th century, had many Belarusian students. The many and various Belarusian institutions included the National Committee, Scientific Society, Institute of Economics and Culture, the Francis Skaryna Printing Press, the famous choir of Ryhor Shyrma, a bookshop, the Ivan Lutskevich Museum, numerous Belarusian newspapers and periodicals which were confiscated or closed by the Polish authorities with boring regularity.

In September 1935 five Druia clerics began their theological studies at Vilna University. They all lodged at their own house of studies, or College as it was called, which had been acquired by Druia the previous year. Father George Kashyra was appointed the superior of the house; he had finished his studies only a few months earlier and was ordained priest on 19 June 1935. The appointment of a new and inexperienced priest to such an important post shows the difficulties Druia was experiencing because of Harbin. Of the three Druia clerics who graduated in 1935, only Kashyra, who studied in Vilna, remained. The other two, Casimir Nailovich and Thomas Padziava, studied in Rome and were despatched to Harbin almost immediately after completion of their studies.

The bulk of the money for the purchase of the house of studies in Vilna seems to have come from the sale of a diamond necklace which Princess Magdalena Radzivill had donated in 1917 for the purpose of establishing a Belarusian Greek-Catholic college in Rome. One of the priests entrusted with this task was Father Fabian Abrantovich. In 1924 he went to Petrograd as diplomatic courier, recovered the necklace which had been safely hidden there all that time, and brought it back with him to Poland. There he sold it for 15000 US dollars, a considerable sum at that time. The greater part of this sum he lent for five years to Bishop Zygmunt Lozinski who needed money for building a seminary in Pinsk, and with the rest he bought a house in Navahradak. In 1927 Abrantovich made a will bequeathing the whole sum and the house to the Marian Fathers in Druia, which he had joined the previous year. The fact that they were not his to give did not appear to worry unduly all those concerned. In the meantime the facts became known to other persons who laid claim to the necklace, and Abrantovich was forced to write to Princess Radzivill who at that time was living in Germany, explaining to her what had happened and asking whether he had done right in handing over the proceeds from the sale of the necklace to Druia. In her answer of 17 March 1927 Princess Radzivill said that the gift was intended

"exclusively in favour of Belarus, in particular for the Greek-Catholic Church. To use it for any other purpose would be clearly the appropriation of somebody else's (i.e. Greek Catholic, Belarusian) property. The dream of that person (i.e. the benefactress) was the foundation of a Uniate College in Rome". Princess Radzivill knew Abrantovich and had obviously trusted him. It must have beeen therefore something of a shock for her when four years later, in 1931, she learned that her wishes had been completely ignored. In the correspondence that ensued between her and Buchys she demanded that the money should be either returned to her or be used according to the original intention. Buchys cynically thanked her "for such a generous gift to our humble Congregation", and tried to convince her that everything was done in strict accordance with the Constitutions of the Marian Fathers and Canon Law. He advised her not to insist on her demand which "may only expose you to unnecesary legal expenses, because the duty of the General Council (of Marian Fathers – *A.N.*) and mine is to comply with the legal norms, obligatory in the Catholic Church, and that is what I am doing". The answer of the Princess was terse and short: "I don't know Canon Law, but in my life I have seen many swindlers, whom a clever Jewish lawyer saved from prison with the help of texts from the Code which he twisted in all sorts of ways. For me and for many persons, whom I told of the behaviour of Fathers Abrantovich and Tsikota, this affair, seen in the light of the Seventh Commandment, is completely clear. In general any action which requires long and subtle explanations to prove its innocence, is suspect. Honest people don't need eloquent arguments".

On 13 November 1931 Buchys wrote to Abrantovich in Harbin: "With the sale of the house in Navahradak there may be difficulties. Princess Magdalena Radzivill demands the return of all that she gave to the Reverend Father (i.e. Abrantovich – *A.N.*), maintaining that the donation has not been used for the purpose for which it was destined".

It is hard to say whether in the political circumstances of the time Princess Radzivill's dream of having a Belarusian college in Rome had any chance of becoming a reality. What can be said with certainty is that Abrantovich, Tsikota and Buchys made it impossible. The "mystery of the diamond necklace" remains a blot on the memory of those priests[14].

Incidentally in her answer to Abrantovich's first letter in 1927, Princess Radzivill wrote: "I am pleased to learn that this affair has at last taken a happy turn... I warmly commend the whole business to Saint Joseph... I consider the Rome foundation to be most useful". Thirty years later, in 1957, Sipovich in his life of Abrantovich summarises these words in the following manner: "The Princess (Radzivill) confirmed that the gift was given for the benefit of Belarus, in particular for the Greek Catholic Church, and that it was her dream to see the Belarusian Uniate College in Rome established. She was satisfied with the information, given by Abrantovich, and commended the whole affair to the protection of Saint Joseph". Then he goes on: "From what has been said above one can see with what sort of persons Father Abrantovich had the dealings and with what courage and honesty he defended them. It also explains where the Druia monastery got the means for its restoration, establishing of the novitiate, high school etc."[15]. Thus loyalty to the Marian Congregation won at the expense of truth...

---

[14] For a detailed account of the "diamond necklace mystery" see: Nadson A. "Taiamnitsa bryl'antavaha kal'e Mahdaleny Radzivil", *Mahdalena Radzivil i Hreka-Katalitskaia Tsarkva*, London 2001, pp.12-43

[15] Sipovich C., "Aitsets Arkhimandryt Fabian Abrantovich", *Bozhym shliakham*, No. 76-81, Paris 1957, p.12

The young clerics who came to Vilna in 1935 and had had nothing to do with the diamond necklace affair were: Ceslaus Sipovich, Felix Zhurnia, Anthony Tsviachkouski, Anthony Padziava and Casimir Aniskowicz, a Pole. There was also a sixth young man, the lay brother Joseph Gaidziel, a talented musician who enrolled in the School of Organists. They were joined the following year by Casimir Sarul, and in 1937 by three more, namely the latter's Br Boniface, Francis Apiachonak and Uladyslau Iashuk.

All the Druia clerics took courses in Philosophy and Theology at the university. They also attended additional courses in Latin, Liturgy and Liturgical chant, Oriental Theology etc. at the local diocesan seminary.

Early in 1936 the students decided to keep a chronicle. Tsviachkouski was entrusted with the task of official chronicler, but Sipovich soon took over from him.

The chronicle is a precious record of everyday life in a small community of young men training for the priesthood. Some events may seem insignificant, but nonetheless they help to give a realistic picture of this life. Thus e.g. on 6 March 1936 Father Superior bought for clerics (or, as they were called, brothers) Felix Zhurnia and Ceslaus Sipovich new hats at seven Polish *zlotys* each. The chronicler adds: "The future will tell whether those two are worthy of such an expense". Again, on March 16 "Brothers Sipovich and Aniskowicz missed Latin class, because they were hauling potatoes out of the cellar which was flooded", while on May 29 "Brother Padziava was supposed to have exams in Church Art, but Prof. Puciata, who is known for his unpunctuality, did not turn up". There was great excitement on 17 January 1937, caused by the solemn opening of the ice rink, made by students themselves, in their back garden. Apparently, however, the rink was not very good because of "its small size and uneven surface".

Some entries in the chronicle reflect the general political atmosphere in Poland of that time. Thus on 7 March 1937, while clerics Aniskowicz and Zhurnia were buying something in a Jewish shop, a Polish captain asked their identity and then complained to the Seminary authorities that the clerics were supporting Jewish business. The chronicler adds: "The 'endeks' (i.e. Polish national democrats – *A.N.*) are boycotting the Jews".

The arrival of five young clerics did not remain unnoticed by the Belarusian community in Vilna. Already in their first year they had several visitors. One of them was Adam Stankievich, priest, scholar, author of some twenty books, among them pioneering works such as *Rodnaia mova u sviatyniakh* (The native language in the churches) and *Khrystsijanstva i bielaruski narod* (Christianity and the Belarusian People). He was one of the founders of the Belarusian Christian democratic movement and regular contributor to its paper *Krynica* (*Bielaruskaia krynica*) from 1925) until Jalbrzykowski's ban in 1928. In 1922 Stankievich, with the permission of Bishop Matulevich, was elected to the Polish Parliament. Early in 1925 the final vote on the Concordat, or treaty, between the Vatican and Polish State took place. The document contained clauses which discriminated against Belarusians and other ethnic groups. Stankievich, out of respect for the Holy Father, did not want to vote openly against the treaty. On the other hand in conscience he could not vote for the treaty which he considered unjust to his people. Consequently he absented himself from the session during which the crucial vote took place. His absence was noticed and he was called to account for his behaviour by the Papal Nuncio... In 1928 Stankievich founded the paper, *Chryscijanskaja dumka* (Christian Thought) which appeared regularly until the outbreak of war in 1939. He was its editor almost to the end of 1937. As a religious publication it required the approval of the ecclesiatical

authorities. In 1937 the Polish authorities closed *Belaruskaja krynica*.. Towards the end that year *Chryscijanskaja dumka* began to appear under a new editor, a layman Victor Iermalkovich, at that time still a student, a close associate of Father Stankievich. He was later replaced by Iazep Pazniak, the former editor of *Bielaruskaia krynica.* With the lay editor the paper no longer required the ecclesiastical approval and was able to publish articles on a wider range of subjects than before. Stankievich's name appeared in the paper as "publisher", but there was no doubt in anybody's mind who the real editor was. This could not have pleased Jalbrzykowski, but, remembering the fiasco with *Bielaruskaja Krynica*, he refrained from banning *Chrysccijanskaja dumka*. Incidentally the change in character of the paper was noticed by readers. Anthony Tsviachkouski, a former Marian cleric, wrote about it to his friend Ceslaus Sipovich who was then already in Rome. Sipovich answered him on 28 July 1939: "No one denies that *Chryscijanskaja dumka* is openly becoming a national political paper; but the more fools those who deny us the proper sustenance (*i.e.* the Polish authorities who closed *Bielaruskaja krynica*) given to us by God, the Creator of mother nature. Where is there today a Polish paper which is not political?"

Still earlier, Stankievich had found a way round another of Jalbrzykowski's obstacles. When the latter refused to give ecclesiastical approval for certain religious books, Stankievich asked Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Archbishop of L'viv, who readily gave all necessary permissions. To avoid accusations that Sheptytsky was interfering in the affairs of another diocese, the place of publication of these books was given as L'viv as well as Vilna.

For many years Stankievich taught Religion and Latin in the Vilna Belarusian High School. There, he and his friend, the Belarusian Orthodox priest Father Alexander Koush, fought together for the souls of young Belarusians, defending them from the influences of materialism and communism. In this fight Stankevich was, according to the testimony of Koush, "as firm as a rock"[16]. He was generally known as a great friend and protector of young people who came to him for help and advice.

By all accounts Stankievich was a strong and attractive personality, the result of a harmonious blend of faith and love of one's country. Secure in his convictions, he respected those who differed from him, knowing that their views were as dear to them as his to him. He was highly respected by Orthodox Belarusians. The Vilna Orthodox seminary was in the same building as the Belarusian High School. The Orthodox priest V. H. who was a student there in the1920s, in his tribute to Father Stankievich on the occasion of the latter's 25th anniversary of the priestlhood wrote that he was "not only a teacher of the Doctrine of Christ, but also a leader in the field of native culture and education, a man whom both Catholics and Orthodox may follow. If there were more such Catholic priests, then there would be no enmity among Belarusians: Catholics and Orthodox would have common leaders, and would not keep apart from one another"[17].

Another frequent guest at the Marian college was Father Kazimier Kulak, the parish priest of Landvarova near Vilna. He held a doctor's degree from the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. On his return from studies, Archbishop Jalbrzykowski suggested that he should take up the Byzantine rite on condition that he would use in his work the Russian, and not the Belarusian, language, which would ensure that he would be shunned by Belarusians. Kulak refused. Eventually he was accepted by

---

[16] Koush A.,"Slava!"; in: *Ksiondz Adam Stankievich*, ed. Jan Shutovich, Vilna 1940, p.86.

[17] *Op. cit.*, p.87

Bishop Zygmunt Lozinski in Pinsk where, among other things, he taught Comparative Theology in the local seminary and was in charge of the Byzantine rite parishes in the diocese. He was also responsible for the organisation of the first three Pinsk Union Conferences (in 1930, 31 and 32). When in 1932 after the death of Lozinski the atmosphere changed, there was no longer any place for Kulak in Pinsk. Disillusioned, he returned to his Vilna diocese. The Belarusian Marian clerics often enjoyed his warm hospitality, while their Superior was asked to help in parish work.

Among the lay guests who visited the Marian College in its first year there were Jan Shutovich, editor of the quarterly *Kalossie* dedicated to literature and problems of Belarusian culture, and Dr Joseph Maletski, a former pupil of Druia high school. The most interesting visitor was Anton Lutskievich, politician, literary critic and custodian of the Belarusian museum named in honour of his brother Ivan. In 1906 brothers Lutskievich had started the famous Belarusian paper *Nasha Niva* which gave its name to the whole period of Belarusian national and cultural revival. Anton also translated the New Testament into Belarusian and presented an autographed copy of it to Marian clerics when he visited them on 29 May 1936.

On 15 May 1936 the clerics paid a visit to Father Uladyslau Talochka, arguably the most informed priest in Vilna, who corresponded with many well known persons in Europe, especially those engaged in the field of Christian Unity. A talented journalist, he wrote in Belarusian periodicals, but mainly in the Polish press on religious and Belarusian subjects. He took the clerics to visit the church of the Basilian sisters and the Belarusian Museum, where they were greeted by Anton Lutskievich who showed them round. They also made the acquaintance of another literary critic, Uladzimier Samoila.

There were, however, limits to the external contacts which the superior, Father Kashyra, would allow. He was reluctant to give permission for clerics to attend any Belarusian public religious or cultural events; and even refused Father Stankievich's invitation on 6 June 1936 to take part in the consecration of the monument on the grave of the Belarusian priest Constantine Stepovich, better known as the poet Kazimier Svaiak, on the tenth anniversary of his death.

But things were about to change. On 19 June 1936 there was a double celebration in the Marian college in Vilna: the anniversary of the priestly ordination of Father Kashyra and the return from Harbin of Father Joseph Hermanovich. The chronicle notes that on this occasion Ceslaus Sipovich made an impromptu speech of welcome.

Father Hermanovich had gone to Harbin in obedience to the orders of his superiors, or, more exactly, Buchys. Obviously he would have preferred to remain in Belarus. Soon after his arrival there he fell ill. It seems to have been a nervous disease, coming from the feeling, perhaps unconscious, that he was not where he should be. When Tsikota became Superior General in 1933, he could have ordered him back, but, despite Fr Hermanovich's continuous pleas, kept postponing his decision. Eventually, on 15 April 1935 Father Stankievich wrote an indignant letter to Tsikota, telling him to stop the nightmare of wasting Hermanovich's talent and health. Whether this letter helped, no one can say. However, towards the end of 1935 Hermanovich left Harbin and China for home, travelling via Rome, where he stayed a few months.

In Vilna Hermanovich was appointed Superior of the Marian college in place of Kashyra. Bishop Sipovich remembered the two years that followed as one of the happiest periods in his life.

After three years in exile Father Hermanovich threw himself headlong into the work among his own people. The Marian college in Vilna became a lively place. Apart from Fathers Stankievich (who often came for a rest in their garden) and Kulak, other frequent visitors were Fathers Boryk, Laposhka and Jan Siemashkievich, better known as the poet Janka Bylina. Among the laymen there were the famous Belarusian tenor Mikhas Zabeida-Sumicki; Dr Stanislaus Hrynkievich, the translator of Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*; Dr Leusha; the editor of *Bielaruskaja krynica* Joseph Pazniak; the law student Victor Iermalkovich (former pupil of Druia); the ethnographer Marian Pietsiukievich; the close associate of Fr Stankievich and conductor of the church choir Adolf Klimovich; the medical student Peter Gaidel (former pupil at Druia) and many others. Sometimes special events took place in the college, such as a dulcimer (tsymbaly) concert by the folk musician Alexander Matusevich from Halshany (the birthplace of Fr Hermanovich) on 7 Nov.1936. Among the visitors there were not only Belarusians. On 13 Oct. 1936 Father Hermanovich was visited by Jan Urban, a Polish Jesuit who was editor of the journal *Oriens* dedicated to the problems of Christian Unity. He invited Fr. Hermanovich to contribute to the Belarusian Greek Catholic journal *Da zluchennia* (For Union), edited by the Belarusian Jesuit Father Anthony Niemantsevich. Unfortunately this journal soon ceasedpublication under the pressure from the Polish authorities. Another interesting visitor was the dean of the theological faculty of Vilna University, Father Ignacy Swirski, an authority on Orthodox Moral Theology.

Father Hermanovich also busied himself with pastoral work, helping parish priests in celebrating mass, hearing confessions and conducting retreats. Father Stankievich coopted him to the editorial board of *Chryscijanskaja dumka*. Articles and poems by Father Hermanovich appeared regularly in that paper.

Unlike other major ethnical groups, – Lithuanians, Germans and even Russians, – the Belarusians in Vilna had no church of their own. Even Matulewicz, who was generally sympathetic to the Belarusian cause, did not dare to give them their own church because of the strength of Polish opposition. The Lithuanians, with whom Stankievich had friendly relations, lent him the use of their church of Saint Nicholas to celebrate Mass for Belarusians on Sundays and great feasts. It was there that Father Hermanovich led a retreat for Belarusians in Lent 1937. He also allowed his clerics to attend the Belarusian Mass.

The Marian clerics together with their Superior also took part in the life of the Belarusian community, attending public lectures and major events such as the "Day of Belarusian Culture" on 16 December 1936, where the chief speaker was Father Stankievich. When Tsikota in Rome heard about it, he was not pleased. On 2 March 1937 he wrote to Hermanovich: "I beg you not to allow the clerics to take part in events such as the Day of Culture or something similar. For them it (i.e. the life in Vilna) should be extension of their novitiate, and they must know it. Please do not forget also the circumstances in which you live. You must also take care that they have the Holy Mass on Sundays in their own place and do not go out to other churches". Father Hermanovich's writing activity likewise did not meet with Tsikota's approval. On 14 May he wrote: "It is painful for me to remind you not for the first time of the Constitutions (of the Marian Congregation – *A.N.*), but it is my duty to do so... Do you think that your talent will perish if you use it after having obtained the necessary permission and submitted (your works) to the appropriate censorship...?"

The reaction of Father Hermanovich is not known, but on 16 May, i.e. two months after Tsikota's first letter, he and all Marian clerics were present at ta concert organised by the Union of Belarusian Students.

### 3. Pogrom

In the meantime life in Druia was fairly quiet. With the use of Belarusian limited to private conversation between the four remaining Belarusian priests and their morning and evening prayers, there seemed nothing left for the Polish authorities to complain about. But even this was too much for some, and in May 1937 the Father Superior (Lysik) suggested, without success this time, that the Belarusian prayers should be replaced by Polish or Latin. On the whole, however, with the appointment of the Polish superior the relations with the local authorities seemed to have improved. Until Christmas 1937 that is. One of the priests, Joseph Dashuta, wrote to Tsikota on 24 January 1938: "Here in Druia the relations have improved lately, because we have a good captain of the Frontier guards. The police chief is also a reasonable man, but after the feasts (i.e. Christmas – *A.N.*), when the clerics stayed here, we hear voices that Father Hermanovich is rearing enemies for Poland... Some clerics openly spoke to certain (Polish) patriots about their wish to see Belarus independent..." This news disturbed Father Tsikota, and in February he wrote to Dashuta: "The news about the clerics made me very worried... Please write, or better tell Father Hermanovich and ask him in my name to think seriously about what he is doing and not to endanger our work".

Tsikota was not the only person displeased with Hermanovich. The Polish authorities were also worried, although for different reasons. His infrequent short visits to Druia made the local police nervous. In Vilna he was under constant secret surveillance, which became more severe as the time went on. An observant man, Father Hermanovich had no difficulty spotting his "tail". He played all sorts of tricks on him. For example, as he himself was telling later, he would take a walk in the rain, protected with an umbrella and galoshes, while the agent caught unawares would be soaked to the skin. On one occasion he went straight to the police station and complained that someone was stalking him... But on the whole it was an unpleasant situation. On 12 June 1938 Father Hermanovich and his seminary friend, Father Victor Shutovich, celebrated the 25th anniversary of their priesthood. This coincided with the annual Belarusian pilgrimage to the "Calvary", an ex-Dominican church outside Vilna with several chapels representing the Passion of Christ. It was a great success. Later Father Victor Shutovich wrote to his friend, Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch at Lisle near Chicago: "Under other circumstances, on return from the "Calvary", the three of us (i.e. Adam Stankievich, Joseph Hermanovich and Victor Shutovich – *A.N.*) should have stopped somewhere together to talk, to laugh. But that was not to be. At every door of Father Joseph's monastery (i.e. the Marian college – *A.N.*) there was a secret agent, making notes of when and where he goes, when and from where he comes back".

By this time the fate of Druia had already been sealed. Unable to accuse the Marian fathers of breaking any law, the administrativce authorities made use of new regulations, which allowed them to deport from the so-called "frontier zone" any person deemed dangerous to the security of the state. Both Druia and Vilna were in the frontier zone. So by the order of the Governor (wojewoda) of Vilna province, Ludwik Bocianski, that Belarusian Marian Fathers were forced to leave Druia by 10 June. They did so, by the decision of the Superior, quietly on 9 June, going only a few miles away, where the frontier zone ended. They were able to return quietly on 14 June to celebrate the feast of Corpus Christi on 16 June. On the same day the Polish nationalists organised a protest meeting against them. Among those who attended it was Father Borodzicz who had done so much harm in 1929. The final act took place

on 23 June. Ceslaus Sipovich describes it in the chronicle: "On 23 June 1938 the Chief of the Braslau secret police and the county sheriff (starosta) came to the monastery of the Belarusian Marian Fathers in Druia and ordered the fathers to leave. They threatened that if the fathers didn't leave voluntarily, they would break into the monastic enclosure and drag them out by force. The (police) car and the monastery were surrounded by armed police. The Fathers, without hurrying, finished celebrating their holy masses... Out of respect for their priestly dignity the Fathers did not let the police to drag them by force to the car... A crowd of people gathered, women began to cry loudly; a photographer came, but just as he was about to take a picture of the Fathers getting into the car, a policeman stopped him..." The four priests expelled were Joseph Dashuta, Casimir Smulka, Vitalis Khamionak and George Kashyra. They stopped for a short time again only a few miles away, in the house of the landowner Huz, a friend of Druia, waiting for further developments.

In the monastery, apart from the superior, Father Òysik and another Polish priest, Fr Oksiutowicz who came to help him from Warsaw, there remained only the clerics who had come from Vilna for the summer vacation. Their turn came on Friday 8 July. They were engaged in haymaking in the monastery's meadow, when at 6 p.m. the local police chief came with expulsion orders for five clerics, namely Casimir and Boniface Sarul, Anthony Padziava, Anthony Aniskovich and Ceslaus Sipovich. The chief, a local man, well known to all, was very embarassed and explained to the clerics that he was only carrying out the orders. Then the chronicle writes: "Anthony Padziava (he was arranging hay in the cart – *A.N.*) came down from the cart, went to take a swim in the river Dzvina, then in the presence of all kissed the ground and said: 'Good bye, my beloved land, you have been our provider'. Another student (Sipovich – *A.N.*) when left alone began to cry bitterly. Why? He could not say himself... After a short consultation about whether to sign the expulsion papers brought by the chief of police, in a tense atmosphere Father Òysik said: 'We did everything we could to make Fathers come back. To no avail. The Nuncio himself refused to speak on our behalf'. Having understood that the resistance of the clerics... would be ineffective... it was agreed that if the following 24 hours brought no change, they would give up and, according to the wish of the Superior, conform to the order as set out in the (expulsion) paper each one of them received... On the same day the Father Superior left for Vilna. The clerics remained, waiting for the Father Superior's telephone call. If such a call did not come by 6 p.m. on Saturday, they were to leave the monastery and go to their parents... On the same Friday clerics Padziava and Sipovich cycled to Kanstantynava to see the exiled Fathers... Father K. Smulka, together with Padziava and Sipovich, went on the shore of the lake... (Father Smulka) was saying: 'It is good that they persecute us. What is bad is that they persecute us only for the national idea. And we have never been directly involved with it. The Poles, by expelling us, have done a foolish thing; it is quite clear that nothing good will come from it for them'.

On Saturday morning all the clerics began slowly getting ready to go to their parents... Sipovich... went to (say goodbye) to the sisters of the Holy Eucharist... Coming out into their courtyard Sipovich met a teacher of the Druia school Sajkowski, whom he knew well. They greeted each other. 'Hallo and goodbye, – said Sipovich. – in a few hours time I must be out of Druia'. Sajkowski grabbed the hand of the cleric and, as it seemed at that time, sincerely and convincingly said: 'God is my witness, now I believe that they persecute priests in Russia'. These words were very significant, because Sajkowski was a Pole...

On Saturday 9 July at about 5 p.m. the young Marians left their nest... For a short time they stayed in their villages. Soon the Very Reverend Father Superior

General called them all to Warsaw. There they passed their summer vacation, hoping to be able to return to Vilna and continue their studies...

The conclusion of this sad story was that the Belarusian Fathers were forced to remain in the Polish province... except Father Hermanovich who decided to go back to Harbin. Clerics Aniskowicz and Sipovich at the suggestion of the Father Superior General agreed to change to the Eastern rite. Anthony Padziava, K. Sarul, Francis Apiachonak, Uladyslau Iashuk, and Boniface Sarul continued their studies at Warsaw seminary. Anthony Tsviachkouski went to live in Warsaw on Vilna Street as an instructor, and Felix Zhurnia to Bielany as assistant secretary to Father Provincial Mroczek.

To Druia came the Polish Marian Fathers with their Superior E. Kulesza. Also in Vilna at Zhyhimont street there will be Polish clerics who will do their studies at Vilna seminary".

Father Hermanovich received an expulsion order in Vilna at about the same time as the clerics in Druia, and left for Warsaw on 13 July. He had no wish to remain in Poland, and preferred to return to Manchuria, even though his experience of that country had not been a happy one. In any case he left in a calmer frame of mind than the first time because he knew that this time he would not be allowed to remain in Belarus. But first he went to Rome where he remained till March 1939.

Of the clerics, Anthony Tsviachkouski, a close friend of Sipovich, left the Marian Congregation for good. He was followed later by two more, Uladyslau Iashuk and Casimir Sarul. Four others, Anthony Padziava, Boniface Sarul, Francis Apiachonak and Felix Zhurnia finished their studies and were ordained priests in Poland, without ever returning to Belarus.

The remaining two, Ceslaus Sipovich and Casimir Aniskowicz (the only Pole in the group), accepted the invitation of the Superior General Andrew Tsikota to change to the Byzantine rite and go to Rome to the Russian College (popularly known as "Russicum") in preparation for being sent to Harbin.

Apparently Sipovich made up his mind about the change of rite on 5 August 1938. At least that is when he told Tsikota about it. The decision was made final during the annual retreat on 6-13 August, which Sipovich offered for the following intentions: "1. The union of the Churches, especially the Eastern and the Roman Catholic; 2. That God may help me to do his will, and give light of understanding and strength to work in the Eastern rite". On the last day of the retreat he made the following note: "I thank all my holy patrons for the help, given to me during these eight days. Quite deliberately and putting aside all doubts I have decided to embrace the Eastern rite if this is what Jesus will demand of me tomorrow".

The expulsion of the Belarusian Marian Fathers was marked by complete silence on the part of the Polish hierarchy and the Papal Nuncio, and by virulent attacks in the Polish press, in particular in the Cracow-based *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* and the *Glos Narodowy,* published in Vilna. Among the few voices raised in defence of the Belarusian Marian Fathers was that of *Przegl≤d Wile΄nski*, which shortly afterwards was itself forced to cease publication due to harassment by the administration. In an article in its final issue of 6 October 1938 the author P. Kontryba (pen name of Father Uladyslau Talochka) likened the role of the Polish Catholic hierarchy in these unhappy events to that of Joseph’s brothers in the Old

Testament when they sold him into slavery in Egypt[18]. Another author who defended Druia was the Jesuit Jan Urban in his *Oriens*[19].

Incidentally both Uladzislau Talochka and Adam Stankievich were expelled from Vilna in December 1938. In addition Talochka was threatened by Archbishop Jalbrzykowski with ecclesiastical censures and forbidden to write for newspapers. As diocesan priests they remained in the territory of the Vilna diocese in places outside the frontier zone, Stankievich in Slonim and Talochka in Bialystok. The "pogrom" against the Belarusians was not limited to Vilna province. In the Navahradak province the young Belarusian Greek Catholic priest, Leo Haroshka, was expelled from the frontier town of Stoupcy. The lay associates of Father Stankievich fared still worse. The head of the F. Skaryna Printing press and editor of the youth journal *Shliakh moladzi* Jazep Najdziuk, the editor of the journal *Kalossie* Jan Shutovich, Victor Iermalkovich and others were arrested late in August 1939 and sent to the notorious Bereza Kartuzka prison camp. Fortunately their sufferings did not last long. On 1 September 1939 the war broke out and a little more than two weeks later the Polish Republic ceased to exist.

In his unfinished manuscript life of Andrew Tsikota, Ceslaus Sipovich wrote: "How empty would be the renaissance of our national life, if there had been no Belarusian monastery, which radiated holiness, industry, and deeper understanding of Christianity in all its aspects – moral, ascetic and psychological – for all Belarusians to see. It was in order to fill this empty place that Father Andrej Tsikota founded in very unfavourable circumstances in Druia on the Dzvina a Belarusian monastery of Marian fathers and brothers"[20]. Further on he continued: "The Druia monastery, when there were assembled together Fr Fabian Abrantovich, a scholar, a profound philosopher, and at the same time a simple and generous man; Fr Joseph Hermanovich, a poet, writer, educator of youth; Fr Vitalis Khamionak, apostle of the people who knew every hamlet and every inhabitant in the Druia parish and was considered by the people a saint; Fr Dashuta, Doctor of Canon Law, a devotee of liturgical chant, – when all these fathers, under the leadership of Tsikota, began to work together in the monastery, in the parish and in the school, not only Druia, but the whole of Western Belarus became conscious of the existence of a Belarusian religious centre"[21].

The above passages, written by Sipovich in 1972, give an idealised picture of Druia and its importance in Belarusian religious and national life in the 1920s and 30s. Unfortunately the reality was quite different. Whatever the intentions of its founders were, they were never fully realised. The main reason was the hostility of the Polish authorities who saw in Druia an obstacle to the polonisation of the Belarusian Catholic population. With a few notable exceptions, the Polish ecclesiastical authorities and clergy were no better. Even Polish Marian Fathers disliked the idea of a Belarusian religious house. When Blessed George Matulewicz was still alive, he tried to calm their spirits, assuring them that Druia was no threat to Poland. His successor, Buchys, had no sympathy with the Polish point of view, but

---

[18] P. Kontryba, "Poklosie nagonki na Marianøw w Drui", *Przegl≤d Wilenski*, No.4-5, Wilno 1938, pp.5-6

[19] P. Urban, "Monachomachia w Druji", *Oriens*, Vol.6, No.4, 1938, Warsaw, pp. 118-120

[20] Ceslaus Sipovich, *Archimandryt Andrej Cikota,* p.22. A manuscript life of Cikota, written in 1972, is preserved in the Francis Skaryna Library.

[21] *Ibid*., p.31

did not understand Belarusians either, seeing in them only apt instruments for the "conversion of Russia".

On 27 June 1954 Father Haroshka wrote to Father Sipovich, asking "whether all Marian fathers and clerics, who were expelled from Druia, belonged to the Eastern rite, or there were (among them) also those who were of Latin rite". Father Sipovich answered on 29 June 1954: "The Druia monastery was entirely of Latin (i.e. Roman) rite. There was no Eastern chapel or vestments. Only some fathers (Abrantovich, Hermanovich, Tsikota, Nailovich K., Padziava Thomas) assumed the Eastern rite, but they worked in Harbin and not in Druia. All expelled clerics, like the fathers, belonged to the Latin rite. From the clerics I alone remained of Eastern rite, and from the fathers J. Hermanovich". Father Leo Haroshka, himself a priest who, like Druia Fathers, was expelled from his parish by the Polish authorities, obviously knew little or nothing about the existence of the "Belarusian religious centre", of which, according to Sipovich, the whole Western Belarus was conscious.

Druia needed more priests, but Harbin not only weakened the existing community, it also frightened off potential candidates. There were young clerics studying for the priesthood, but of the first three who graduated in 1935, two were sent immediately to Harbin. The five new clerics who started their studies in the same year were not expected to complete them till 1941.

The opinion among Belarusians seems to have been that Father Tsikota gave in too easily to the demands of the Polish authorities. On 7 October 1938 Adam Stankievich wrote to Hermanovich : "When he (Tsikota – *A.N.*) was in Vilna, we argued that his policy had failed to achieve its aim. True, it was I who was talking, and he did not agree, but the (subsequent) events seem to have proved me right. It is therefore necessary (for him) to reconsider the policy and make some changes". Father Victor Shutovich was more categorical. On 15 October 1938 he wrote to Fr John Tarasevitch in Lisle near Chicago: "At this moment I doubt whether the Belarusian members of religious congregations can do anything good for Belarus. I have in mind the example of the Marian Fathers. Tsikota is my friend, he is full of life and energy. He did much for the Belarusians before he entered the (Marian) Congregation. The Congregation broke him and made a cosmopolitan out of him. In Druia he did more for the Poles than for Belarusians. And they repaid him with derision and mudslinging. Now he, like you, is an exile, far from his native country, with no fixed abode in the world. Other Belarusian members (of the Congregation) are also dispersed, not one of them remained in their native land. That’s religious life for Belarusians!"

In 1938 very little remained of the original idea of Druia. Thus the expulsion of Belarusian priests was the *coup de grace* for something which for all intents and purposes had already ceased to exist. This, of course, in no way excuses the behaviour of the Polish authorities.

The sad irony was that while the Poles were engaged in combatting Belarusian Catholic priests, the fate of the Polish state hung in the balance. One year later the Second World War broke out, Poland fell, and Western Belarus was reunited with its Eastern part within the Belarusian Soviet Republic. Whatever trials and tribulations were in store for Belarusians in the years that followed, of Polish rule there remained nothing except unpleasant memories.

**4. Eternal City**

The expulsion of the Belarusian Marian Fathers from Druia was a turning point in the life of Ceslaus Sipovich. With no hope of returning to Druia, and not relishing the prospect of remaining indefinitely in Poland, he and another cleric, Casimir Aniskowicz, accepted the offer of Father Tsikota to go to Rome, on condition that they should adopt the Byzantine rite and on completion of their studies be sent to Harbin to join other Marian Fathers who worked among the Russians. Later in life Sipovich was reticent on this point. When once asked by the present writer, he answered curtly that, if ordered, he would have refused to go to Harbin. The documents which have since come to light tell a different story. But in 1938 the prospect of going to Harbin might have seemed far away in comparison with the immediate attraction of being in Rome.

It thus happened that in October 1938 two ex-Druia clerics came to the Eternal City. Apart from being the See of the successor of St Peter, Rome is also a major centre for theological education. There are several Pontifical universities and institutes, the largest being the Gregorian University, directed by the Jesuits. Students live in their national colleges – French, German, Brazilian, Polish, Ukrainian etc, and members of the religious orders in their houses of studies.

The Marian Fathers have their house, or, as it is called, college in Rome at Via Corsica. It serves as the residence for the Superior General and the Council, and as the house of studies for their clerics. Sipovich and Aniskowicz did not reside there, but were sent to the Russian College or "Russicum". Founded in 1929, this was not a Russian national college (although there were Russian students from time to time), but a place where students of various nationalities were trained for prospective missionary work among Russians. Sipovich put it fairly well in a letter to Anthony Tsviachkouski of 28 July 1939: "I live in a college, where Russians, Germans, French, a Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Slovaks, Estonians etc. form a fairly harmonious group, whose aim is to work for Russia today abroad, and get ready for the future after the fall of the bolsheviks". The direction of the Russicum was entrusted to the Jesuits.

Russicum Students frequented the Gregorian University. Sipovich in the letter quoted above writes: "On the whole the Gregorian (university) did not disappoint (me). I had a high opinion of it before, and now this opinion has been strengthened... There are professors of world fame, but often it is quite a strain to listen to them... Latin does not present to us any particular difficulties, except that one must get used to the French or English pronounciation. We passed the exams for the Bachelor's degree with better than average results..."

Apart from university studies, Sipovich made an effort to learn languages, in particular Russian, German and Italian. He even, under the pen name Vasil Kryvichanin, sent to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* his translation of a short poem by Goethe[22]. Italian he studied during school hours, absenting himself from certain lectures. This was, as he himself admitted, against the rules, but brought the necessary results. He did not neglect Belarusian. He had a copy of a Belarusian grammar (most probably by Tarashkievich) and other books which he studied when time permitted (in the F. Skaryna Library in London there is a copy of the reader in Belarusian modern literature by I. Dvarchanin with penciled marginal notes by Sipovich). He

---

[22] "Mignon", z Goethe pierarabiu Vasil Kryvicanin. *Chryscijanskaja dumka*, No.36, Vilna, 20.12.38, p.7

realised how little he knew about his native country during a visit which he and Father Hermanovich paid to the Ukrainian College, where he was asked questions about Belarusian history, culture and its present situation. He began to study these things more intensively, especially history. Soon he was able to present a paper on Francis Skaryna to an audience of students and superiors of the Russicum. The paper has not been preserved, but here is the description of Sipovich himself in his "Letter from Rome", dated 25 May 1939, to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* in Vilna: "Not long ago I read a paper on Dr F. Skaryna to an ethnically mixed audience. Many (listeners) became interested in the person of our scholar. One German professor (Ammann? – *A.N.*) asked me to help him in his work. He is working on early Russian Church history, and in various documents he encounters Belarusian language and Belarusian personalities"[23]. Incidentally Sipovich, probably encouraged by Father Hermanovich, began to write to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* while still in Vilna. The paper ceased publication with the outbreak of war in September 1939. In October of the same year Vilna became part of Lithuania. The Belarusians in Vilna revived the publication of the paper *Krynica*. Sipovich sent them his reports from Rome, the last one being printed on 3 May 1940. In July Lithuania was overrun by Soviet troops and *Krynica* ceased publication.

On 14 January 1940 Father Adam Stankievich celebrated the 25th anniversary of his priesthood. Belarusians began preparation for this occasion some 6 months in advance, when Father Stankievich was in exile in Slonim. The early start was undoubtedly intended to draw the attention to this fact, and was also due to the uncertain political situation. Greetings began to arrive as early as June 1939. Among those who sent greetings were Metropolitan Andrew Sheptycky from L'viv, other Ukrainian and Lithuanian bishops, priests (both Catholic and Orthodox) as well as many Belarusians and other persons who knew and respected him. Characteristically there was not a single greeting from a Polish bishop (not even from his own ordinary, archbishop Jalbrzykowski), priest or lay person. Some greetings were sent to the Belarusian quarterly *Kalossie* in Vilna, presumably because the writers did not know the Slonim address of Father Stankievich. The Polish police raided the editorial offices of the journal and confiscated some greetings, including those from Father Hermanovich. Ceslaus Sipovich also sent his greetings. A copy, which has been preserved in his papers, is dated 27 August 1939. It never arrived, probably because of the war which broke out on 1 September.

Sipovich was impressed by the Ukrainian College with nearly one hundred students, wearing blue cassocks with yellow sashes (Ukrainian national colours). It was there that he was asked why Belarusians had no place of their own. "With shame, – he wrote to Tsviachkouski, – I managed somehow to explain that there was shortage of Belarusian priests and Belarusians in general in Rome". It must have been a humiliating moment for Sipovich. One may wonder whether it made him think about the bitter irony of his own position, namely as the only Belarusian cleric in Rome he was getting ready to "convert Russia", while there was a crying need for priests in his native country. Obviously at that time he knew nothing about the project of Princess Radzivill to establish a Belarusian college in Rome and how her efforts had been frustrated by the Marian Fathers... In any case he seemed to have felt acutely the absence of Belarusians in the Eternal city, and in his modest way tried to to make it up for it. In his correspondence from Rome to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* about taking possession of Basilica St. John in Lateran by the newly elected Pope Pius XII on 18 May 1939, he wrote that among the voices in honour of the Pope in

---

[23] V. Kryvicanin, "List z Rymu", *Chryscijanskaja dumka*, No.19, Vilna, 20.6.39, p.5

many languages, one could also hear Belarusian 'Long live the Holy Father'". It is not difficult to guess whose voice it was. Again, writing about the Byzantine liturgy at St. Peter's Basilica on 21 May to mark the 950 years of baptism of "Rus" he explained that Father Abrantovich, who was expected from Harbin, did not make it in time, and that is why there was no Belarusian present among the concelebrants[24]. In fact Abrantovich was expected to take part not as representative of Belarus, but in his capacity as head of the Russian "Ordinariat" in Manchuria.

The sad fact was that the church authorities in Rome at that time ignored Belarus and Belarusians. Thus at the Pontifical Gregorian University Sipovich was registered simply as "Russian". Among his paper there is a copy of his letter in Latin, dated 14 January 1941, to the secretary of the University, in which he wrote: "Following the appeal to send corrections of mistakes with regard to names etc. in the register of students, which somehow might have crept in, I take the liberty of asking the Secretariat why it is that already for the third time (because it happened twice in previous years), instead of Belarusian nationality, to which I belong, I am described as Russian? I presume this has happened by mistake; however if there are some reasons for this, I would like to know them without delay".[25]

On the next day he received the following reply in Italian, signed by the Secretary of the University: "The reason why Y(our) R(everence) is registered as 'Russian' is the simple fact that there is no political state 'Belarus' but only Russia, and we compile our registers not according to race but according to the political state. In the same way e.g. the Scots are registered as English".[26]

The "explanation" does not give much credit to the intelligence of the secretary or, indeed, the venerable institution he represented. At the time in question Russia was no more independent than Belarus: both countries formed part of the Soviet Union. Thus, if one followed the rules set out in the secretary's letter, one could talk about Soviet and not Russian nationality. As far as Sipovich was concerned, he had never been even near Russia, left Western Belarus one year before it was occupied by the Soviet Union, and travelled to Italy on a Polish passport, issued to him by those who expelled him from his native country for being Belarusian. So what nationality did it make him? As for a Scotsman to be called English, one would like to meet the brave person who would dare to do this.

The thought of Belarus seemed never to have been absent from the mind of Sipovich. Thus on Good Friday 11 April 1941 he makes the following entry in the "Chronicle": "Part of us (i.e. Marians) go to venerate the Holy Cross, and another part to the Lateran Basilica where a beautifully sad service took place. It must be said that the present writer did not see in it anything different from what on the same day was taking place in the Druia church (Belarus). Of course there were no numerous canons and prelates present..."

---

24 *Ibid.*

25 "Sequendo hortationem ad tabulam evidentem ad corrigenda menda, quae aliquo modo relate ad nomina etc. studentium intrusa sint, ausus sum rogare P. T. Secretariam, cur iam ter (quia iam bis annis labentibus accidit) mihi loco nationis Alborussicae ad quam pertino, Russica apponitur? Puto hoc accidisse per mendum; si fortasse adessent aliquae rationes, sin minus de eis scire voluissem".

26 "La ragione perché V. R. si trova registrato come "Russo" é ´il semplice fatto che non esiste uno stato politico 'Albarussia' ma soltanto Russia e noi facciamo i nostri registri non riguardo all razza ma allo stato politico. Cosí anche i Scozzesi p.e. sono registrati come Inglesi".

The "Chronicle" was brought from Vilna to Rome by Father Hermanovich, who for some time stayed at the Russicum, presumably to get better acquainted with Russian liturgical usage. Sipovich continued the Chronicle till 1943.

On 10 February 1939 Pope Pius XI died. He was succeeded by Pius XII, the Pope who was destined to rule over the Catholic Church during the Second World War and the post-war period of confrontation between the Communist world, led by the Soviet Union, and the West. The coronation of the new Pope took place on 12 March.

On the same day at the Marian College there was a farewell dinner in honour of Father Hermanovich. Sipovich in the "Chronicle" notes that among the present guests were the Russian Catholic Bishop Alexander Evreinoff and the Jesuit Father Philippe de Régis, Rector of the Russicum. The Superior General, Father Andrew Tsikota, thanked Evreinoff for honouring this "Marian family occasion" with his presence, and also Father Philippe de Régis for taking care of Marian clerics, who are getting ready in the Russicum to become workers in the field of Church Unity. He also promised more Marian students for the Russicum. Evreinoff in his turn thanked the Marian Congregation for the work they were doing for his countrymen (i.e. Russians). Father Hermanovich left Rome for Harbin on 15 March 1939.

On 21-23 July the General Chapter of Marian Fathers was held, at which Bishop Buchys was once again elected their Superior General in place of Father Tsikota. Father Abrantovich came from Harbin for the Chapter. After the Chapter he went to Poland, and was there on 1 September when the German-Polish war broke out. On 17 September Soviet troops occupied western Belarus and Ukraine which had formed part of the Polish Republic, and the state of Poland ceased to exist. Father Abrantovich was then in L'viv in Ukraine, visiting Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky. He was arrested some time later while attempting to cross the Soviet-German border. It is not exactly known of what was he accused. Metropolitan Sheptytsky in his report to the Oriental Congregation on the state of the Belarusian Exarchate, written on 14 August 1943, has this to say on the subject: "There are rumours that he (i.e. Abrantovich – A.N.) was perhaps imprudent in offering English Pounds to a Jew, which might have aroused suspicions and be the cause of his arrest"[27]. On the other hand the fact that he came from Japanese-occupied Manchuria did not help because of the tense relations which existed between the Soviet Union and Japan. Some eyewitnesses who were also imprisoned with him in L'viv said that he was tortured and suffered very much, but comported himself with dignity. According to the latest news he died on 2 January 1946 in the Butyrki prison in Moscow. Such was the tragic end of this truly talented man and priest. Belarusians had great hopes of him, which remained unfulfilled.

With no news of Abrantovich it was decided to send Father Tsikota to Harbin in his place. He left Rome on 3 November, having adopted the Byzantine rite and received the title of Archimandrite literally a few days before his departure.

Thus in Rome there remained only two ex-Druia members, Sipovich and Aniskowicz.

On Christmas day, 25 December 1939 Bishop Alexander Evreinoff conferred deacon's orders on Ceslaus Sipovich. Aniskowicz was not admitted to the diaconate and was expelled from the Russicum and the Marian Congregation for some

---

[27] "On a racconté qu'il a été peut-être peu prudent en offrant à un Juif des Livres anglaises, ce qui a crée des soup¢ons et a été peut-être la cause des son arrestation". The report, entitled *Exarchat de la Russie Blanche,* was addressed to the Secretary of the Oriental Congregation, Cardinal Eugene Tisserant.

misdemeanour. On 10 January he left for France to join the army to fight against the Germans. Sipovich was very upset with the treatment meted out to Aniskowicz and tried to save him, even by writing to Tsikota to accept him in Harbin for a probationary period. All to no avail.

Life in war-time Rome seemed pretty normal, although it lost its usual boisterousness. Priests and students of many nationalities were forced to leave because of hostilities between Italy and their countries. Sipovich made a note in his "Chronicle" on 19 May 1940: "The Rector of the Russicum, Fr F. de Regis is leaving for France. Many students are sorry for him". In a letter to Fr Tsikota of 11 May he wrote: "Not long ago Aniskowicz C. sent me perhaps his last letter: he is leaving for the front, asks to take care of his belongings... We are all sorry for him. Belgians and Dutch are hurrying home, to war".

For Ceslaus Sipovich, along with his studies, it was a time of intensive spiritual preparation for receiving the holy order of priesthood.

The great day came on Sunday 16 June 1940. During the Pontifical Liturgy in the church of Saint Anthony the Great which was attached to the Russicum, Bishop Alexander Evreinoff bestowed the order of holy priesthood on deacon Ceslaus Sipovich. A week later the new priest wrote to Fathers Tsikota and Hermanovich in Harbin: "I do not undertake to describe my various feelings, especially at the moment of my receiving the priesthood. They somewhere touched on what in a man is called the essence; and since the essence is invisible, so those feelings cannot be expressed in words. I only wish not to darken them with life’s patina, but to present them such as they were in that happy moment before the throne of the Good God".

On the next day the new priest celebrated his Liturgy at the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore at the altar before the icon of the Mother of God "Salus populi romani". On the following day – Liturgy in the chapel of the Marian College at via Corsica.

At the time of his ordination Sipovich had only just finished his third year of theology, and needed another year to complete the course for the licenciate. So in October he went back to the Gregorian University. There also the war was having its impact: not only students, but six of the professors were unable to return to resume their teaching duties.

For Father Sipovich this was supposed to be the last year in Rome, after which he had to go to Harbin. But as the time was drawing near, something happened. It seems that Tsikota did not insist on his coming immediately. Sipovich wrote to him on 18 June 1941: "After receiving your letters the General Council decided to leave me for another year here in Rome, on condition that I finish my licenciate now, and next year obtain my doctor’s degree. Bishop Peter (Buchys – *A.N.*) has made me understand that the reasons for my going to Harbin as soon as possible are very important; therefore if I am given another year, I must make the best use of it... I am very, very grateful to Father Archimandrite (Tsikota) for not ‘insisting’ and to the Bishop for ‘not forcing me to go’. For myself I wish to say that I would fly like a bird to you, but what use to you is a bird with an empty head...".

Four days later, on 22 June 1941 the German-Soviet war broke out. It was followed by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December, which forced the United States to enter the war. It was hardly a propitious time to set out on a journey across the world. There was another, personal, reason: Sipovich failed the final oral examination for the licentiate in Theology, and not once but twice, in June and then again in October. There is a note in the "Chronicle" on 18 October 1941: "Fr C. Sipovich sits the examination for the licentiate at the Gregorian University for the second time, and for the second time he fails (Lennerz, S.J.). What will happen next is

up to the superiors". On the following day, 19 October, Sipovich made the following note on a piece of paper which is found among his retreat notes: "If I receive this grace (i.e. permission to continue his studies – *A.N.*), – and I firmly believe I will, – I promise: never in my life to boast about my academic degree (in the strictest sense of the word) or even mention it to anyone without need. After failure – penance. However, God, You see all, You know and see my future, my temperament and character; if You consider that the licenciate and this additional year of study are not necessary for me, then lead me on your path which is beyond my understanding. As to what Father General told me today: transeat a me, sed non mea voluntas sed Tua fiat (may it pass me by, but let it be not my will but yours)". Thus it seems that initially Buchys was against Sipovich continuing his studies. However there is another note by Sipovich, dated 3 November, on the same piece of paper: "God listened to me, unworthy as I am, through the intercession of the Good Mother of God and her servant Father Stanislas Papczynski. Everything conspired against my wishes: failure in exams, unwillingness of the Father General, war – and despite it all in the name of God I shall continue my studies".

In June 1942 he was third time lucky, but with the war raging all over the world there was no question of his going anywhere.

With the plans of going to Harbin abandoned or at least suspended, in the autumn of 1942 Sipovich began his studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome. Four years later, on 19 December 1946, he obtained his doctorate after successfully defending a thesis on the penultimate Belarusian Uniate Metropolitan, Jason Junosza Smogorzewski (1780-88). But by then the world was a different place.

Since 1941 Sipovich had been living not in the Russicum but in the Marian College at via Corsica. The war did not seem to have had much effect on him or on the Marian community. There is an interesting entry in the Chronicle on 30 August 1943: "Fr J. Vajtkievich and C. Sipovich go to the seaside at Fregene. On the beach they watch American planes flying to bomb Civitavecchia". On rare occasions news reached Rome from German-occupied Belarus and Poland. Thus Sipovich reports in his Chronicle on 7 February 1942: "H. E. Father Superior General received from the Belarusian Committee in the Generalgouvernement (i.e. Poland – *A.N.*) (Warsaw, Kniazhaia 4) a request and at the same time what looks like complaint against the Superior of the Polish province of the Marian Congregation, that , despite the fact that the Warsaw Metropolitan Curia gave Belarusians the church of St Martin (Piwna street), he refused to give there a Belarusian priest, and even did not want to speak with the Belarusian delegation on this subject. The document was written on 2 January, No.15/42-K/III. It was signed by the chairman M. Shchors".

At that time there were three Belarusian Marian priests from Druia in Poland, namely Casimir Smulka, Joseph Dashuta and Vitalis Khamionak. With a bit of good will it would not have been impossible to assign one of them to pastoral work among Belarusians. But it was not to be. In the Chronicle under 8 February there is the following note: "To this request there has already been sent some good advice, namely that the Belarusian Committee should address the same request to the Oriental Congregation". It is surprising that Sipovich could call this advice "good". The Belarusian Catholics in Warsaw belonged to the Roman (Latin) rite, and their affairs were not within the competence of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches (or, as it was generally called, the Oriental Congregation). Moreover, even if they had been, the possiblities of Rome in war-torn Europe were very limited. Thus the actions of the Marian superiors both in Warsaw and in Rome look very much like a snub for the Belarusians, telling them to go away and leave Marian Fathers alone. Incidentally, the chairman of the Belarusian Committee in Warsaw, Dr Nicholas Shchors, was

Orthodox. It would be interesting to know what impression on him was made by the Marian Fathers who were so keen to "convert" Orthodox Russians, but could not spare one Belarusian priest to help Belarusian Catholics.

The question of pastoral care for Belarusian Catholic community in Warsaw was resolved by the arrival towards the end of January or beginning of February of the well known Belarusian priest and writer, Peter Tatarynovich who had escaped from Belarus to avoid arrest and possible death at the hands of the German authorities. He organised the parish and from September 1942 was appointed teacher of religion at the Belarusian school. But that was no thanks to the Marian Fathers. The arrival of Father Tatarynovich in Warsaw was reported in a letter to Buchys by the Superior of the Polish province, Fr J. Sobczyk (the one who refused to help Belarusians). Sipovich makes a note of this letter in his Chronicle under the date of 21 March 1942. In the same letter Sobczyk wrote about the three Belarusian Marian Fathers, in particular about Father Dashuta who could not wait to go back to Druia. However the superior (i.e. Sobczyk) refused permission on the grounds that there were already some Polish priests working in Druia, and Dashuta was needed in Poland. On 22 April Sipovich received a letter, dated 10 April, from Warsaw from one of the exiled priests, Father Vitalis Khamionak, in which he wrote: "If it were possible to obtain permission to return from the exile to Druia, we all would fly there like birds. However we must subordinate our wishes to the will of God and of our superiors".

In fact there were Marian Fathers in Druia at that time. One of them was Father Anthony Leszczewicz (1890-1943), a Pole who had spent most of his priestly life in the Far East, in particular in Harbin. In 1938 he returned to Poland and entered the Marian noviciate in Skurzec. In 1939, just a week before the beginning of the Second World War, he came to Druia. The other was George Kashyra (1904-1943), one of the Belarusian Fathers who were expelled from Druia by the Poles in 1938. After the outbreak of the war he made his way to Lithuania where he remained for nearly three years. In 1942 he returned to Druia. On respectively 17 and 18 February 1943 in the village of Rosica north of Druia, both those priests, together with their parishioners, whom they refused to abandon, were burned alive by the Germans. The news of their tragic and heroic death reached Rome on 10 May and was confirmed on 10 June 1943. In 1999 Pope John Paul II beatified both Fathers Leszczewicz and Kashyra.

The Warsaw incident was not the only involvement of the Marians with Belarusian affairs at that time. On 12 January 1942 Buchys wrote a paper entitled "De missione orientali inter alborussos" (On the Oriental Mission among Belarusians). This he did at the request of the Oriental Congregation, most probably in connection with the establishement in the autumn of 1939 by Metroplitan Andrew Sheptycky of four Oriental Exarchates which Rome, after much hesitation and initial refusal, was forced reluctantly to recognise. One of the Exarchates was that of Belarus, with at its head Father Anthony Niemantsevich, a Belarusian Jesuit priest of the Byzantine rite who was arrested by Germans in July 1942 and died in prison during the smallpox epidemics. The greater part of Buchys's paper consists of general superficial information, taken mainly from articles in the Belarusian paper *Krynica* which appeared in Vilna after the outbreak of the war from autumn 1939 to July 1940, Belarusian calendars for 1938 and 1939, and similar sources. Here are his more important conclusions: "Belarus is part of Russia proper... today there is no better bridge between Catholicism and Russia than Belarus... Once converted, Belarus will be capable of supplying a sufficient number of able workers to bring about the conversion of the whole of Russia... The time is not convenient now to talk in detail

about the manner of organising a Belarusian mission for the conversion of Russia. However it is quite clear that the whole Catholic hierarchy in the Belarusian territory should be intimately convinced of the necessity of this mission and of its certain fundamental principles... The fifth principle is very delicate; it teaches (us) to exercise caution in affirming the national independence of Belarusians in Great Russia, lest it may lead to hostility bewteen Belarus and Great Russia and thus hinder the future work of conversion of the latter. On the other hand Belarusian patriotism is quite awake, and denial of independence (of Belarus – *A.N.*) may constitute an obstacle to the conversion of non-Catholic Belarusians. The bishops of Belarus must show extreme prudence"[28].

It seems that the Vatican had to scrape the bottom of the barrel to find this "expert" on Belarus. It speaks volumes about the state of their knowledge of, and interest in, that country and its people. Obviously what mattered for Buchys, a true disciple of d'Herbigny to the end, was the "conversion" of Russia. As far as Belarus was concerned he knew little, and cared even less.

It is instructive to compare Buchys's memorandum with the report of Sheptytsky on Belarusian Exarchate, in which the great Ukrainian Metropolitan wrote: "It is a very sad thing to see that in the 20th century a Catholic nation, counting almost 3 million souls must consider a bishop of their own nationality as an unattainable ideal. The Belarusians want above anything else a bishop of their own nation, because they have a need of priests of their nation"[29].

Sipovich seemed to have been familiar with the contents of Buchys's paper from the beginning. Almost ten years later, on 8 May 1951, by now from London he wrote to him: "I am well acquainted with what Your Excellency wrote to the Oriental Congregation about Belarusians, at the time when others showed little or no interest in them... Things, however, have moved forward, and now we are faced with other requirements. For this reason Belarusians today cannot agree with all your plans and suggestions to the Sacred Congregation (I have in mind your paper *De missione orientali apud Alborussos* of 12.1.1942). Catholicism in Belarus must be considered in the same manner as, for instance, in Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine etc. – which means that Belarus must have its own clergy, and hierarchy depending directly on Rome".-

On 22 July 1942 Buchys had a long talk with Sipovich about Belarus. Here is the relevant entry in the Chronicle: "His Exc. Bp Buchys in a conversation with Fr C.Sipovich expressed his views about Belarusians. It is a fact – he said, – that Belarusians today are disunited: some stress their nationality as separate among the Slavs, others consider themselves Poles, and still others – Russians. Thus there are

---

[28] "Alba Russia est pars propriae Russiae... hodie non datur pons inter catholicismum et Russiam melior Alba Russia... Conversione ista iam facta, Alba Russia capax esset suppeditare sufficientem quantitatem aptissimorum operariorum ad efficiendam conversionem totius Russiae... De ordinanda missione alborussa ad convertendam Russiam vix expedit nunc temporis loqui ita, ut intretur in singulas minutas res. Sed clarum omnino est totam and integram hierarchiam catholicam in terris alborussorum debere esse intime persuasam de necessitate eiusdem missionis et de quibusdam principiis fundamentalis... Quintum principium valde delicatum est; nam docet independentiam nationalem alborussam in magna Russia caute esse afirmandam, ne luctamen inter Albam et Magnam Russiam condatur et impediat futurum opus conversionis huius. Ex altera parte patriotismus alborussus iam satis vigilat et ideo negatio independentiae facile crescere potest in impedimentum conversionis acatholicorum alborussorum. Extraordinaria igitur prudentia opus habent episcopi Albo-Russiae".

[29] "Il est bien triste de voir qu'au XX siècle une nation catholique, qui compte presque trois millions d'âmes doit toujour considerer un évêque de sa nationalité comme un idéal qu'elle ne peut pas obtenir. Les Ruthènes Blancs désirent avant tout un évêque de leur nation, car ils ont besoin d'un clergé de leur nation". *Exarchate de la Russie Blanche* (cf. Note 25)

three possible choices: to belong to Poland, or Russia, or have complete independence. The fact that it is a Catholic country argues in favour of belonging to Poland; in Russia, on the other hand, Belarusian Catholics could spread their religion throughout the whole of that country. Both possibilities, however, have their dangers for Belarusians and require sacrifices from them. Bishop refuses to say what they should chose and leaves it to Belarusians themselves: ‘Let them decide about their own sacrifices’". This episode throws an interesting light on the curious mentality of the man who looked at the fate of the whole nation from what he thought was good for the Church, rather than trying to see how the Church could help the nation to achieve its full spiritual potential.

Another curious episode, duly reported in the Chronicle, took place on 26 November 1943: "Father General (Buchys – *A.N.*) assembled all Orientals in order to discuss with them the problem of the attitude towards all sorts of nations and nationalism. On this occasion he stressed that the Church is not directly concerned with the problems such as ‘whether Russia will include Ukraine and Belarus or not’. Therefore when the Pope in Rome helps the Ukrainian College, he has in mind the needs of the Church and not directly (the good) of Ukrainian people". The "Orientals", apart from Sipovich, were two Russian Theology students, whom Abrantovich had brought with him from Harbin in 1939. It is not fanciful to think that the reason for the meeting was the difference of opinion on national problems between them and Sipovich. It is a well known fact that Russian anti-communist emigrés were allergic to the idea of independence of Ukraine and Belarus.

By the middle of 1943 it was becoming evident that the war, although it lost nothing of its ferocity, had reached its turning point. On 9 July the Allies, having defeated German and Italian troops in Africa, invaded Sicily. Thus the war reached Italian soil. On 19 July Rome was bombed for the first time by the Allies. All this proved fatal to the fascist regime of Mussolini who was overthrown on 25 July. The Italians refused to go on fighting and began secret negotiation with the Allies for armistice. The German forces, who were in Italy as allies, became an army of occupation. After the second allied air raid on 13 August, Rome was declared an "open city", i.e. free from any object of military interest, but it was not liberated till 4 June 1944.

## 5. Beginning of the Apostolate

The war brought a considerable number of Belarusians to Italy. Many of these, as former Polish citizens, were serving in the ranks of the Polish army. Others began arriving as refugees soon after the cessation of hostilities in May 1945.

Among the new arrivals in Rome in 1945 were two Belarusian Catholic priests. One of them, Father Peter Tatarynovich (1896-1978) was a priest of the Roman rite. Ordained in 1921, he had worked in various parishes of the Pinsk diocese. A friend of Father Adam Stankievich, he had been a regular contributor to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* and author of several books. As has been already noted, during the war Tatarynovich was pastor to the Belarusian community in Warsaw. In 1944, with the approach of the Soviet troops, he and most of his flock abandoned that city and headed West. The end of the war found him in Germany. In the autumn of 1945 Tatarynovich arrived in Rome, where, despite his age (he was 49) he enrolled in the Pontifical Oriental Institute. In 1949 he received a Doctor’s degree for a thesis on the spiritual teaching of the 12th century Belarusian saint, Cyril, bishop of Turau. He was to remain in the Eternal City for the rest of his life.

The second arrival was a priest of the Byzantine rite, Father Leo Haroshka (1911-1977). Unlike other Belarusian priests, he had had the good fortune of receiving his secondary education at the Belarusian High School ("himnaziia") in Navahradak, before it was closed by the Polish authorities. After finishing school he decided to dedicate his life to the restoration of the Belarusian Greek Catholic ("Uniate") Church which had been suppressed by the Russians in 1839. In 1931 he began his training for priesthood at the Ukrainian Seminary in L’viv, where he was accepted by Metroplitan Andrew Sheptycky. After his priestly ordination in 1937 he had been working in the Pinsk Diocese. His first appointment was at Stoupcy, a frontier town between the Polish Republic and the Soviet Union. In May 1939 he was expelled from there by the Polish authorities, who considered him a danger to the security of the Polish State. With the outbreak of war in September 1939 and the fall of Poland, Metropolitan Sheptycky established a Greek Catholic Exarchate for Belarus, which in 1941 was reluctantly approved by Rome. The Exarch was Father Anthony Niemantsevich, who appointed Father Haroshka second councillor of the Exarchate. After the arrest of Niemantsevich by the Germans in July 1942 and his subsequent death in prison, the responsibility for the exarchate fell on Father Haroshka. He was also very active in the field of education. As head of the Belarusian Medical School in Baranavichy he was arrested in 1943 when he thwarted the plans of the Germans to round up the students and send them to Germany as forced labourers. The end of the war found him a refugee in Germany. From there he wrote to Rome to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, reporting on the state of the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus, and demanded what was to be done to help Belarusian Greek Catholics at home and in exile. Having received no reply, Haroshka on his own initiative and without asking anyone’s permission, made his way to Rome and presented himself in person to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. This time he was noticed. He was given accommodation at the Russicum at the expense of the Congregation. By the end of the year Haroshka, with the blessing of the Congregation, had started work on the prayer book for the faithful *Bozhym shliakham* (On God’s way) which appeared early in 1946. It so happened that the same year 1946 marked 350th anniversary of the Union of Brest of 1596, when the Orthodox Church in Belarus and Ukraine was united with the Holy See. To mark this occasion Pope Pius XII issued on 25 Decemeber 1945 an Encyclical Letter "Orientales omnes". Father Haroshka persuaded the Congregation of the necessity of translating it

into Belarusian. Moreover he argued that, taking into account the changed historical circumstances, the term "Rutheni" in the encyclical should be translated as "Belarusians and Ukrainians". The church authorities hesitated at first but finally agreed with Father Haroshka's arguments. This was a small but significant victory. There were several Belarusian priests and students before Father Haroshka in Rome, but not one of them had made any effort to get the Church authorities to recognise Belarus as a separate nation with its own particular needs and aspirations. It was Father Haroshka who put Belarus firmly on the ecclesiastical map.

Father Sipovich had for seven years been cut off from anything Belarusian, and for him the arrival of two priests of a different background, with no connection with Druia or Vilna, and fresh from pastoral work among Belarusians, must have been a revelation. It added a new dimension to his understanding of the Belarusian problem both in its ecclesiastical and national aspects. However his first impression of them was rather curious. During his annual retreat on 20-28 September 1945 he made the following resolutions: "Prudently maintain contacts for the good of the Belarusian cause, especially for the good of the Holy Church in Belarus. Be tactful and careful with Fr P(eter) T(atarynovich) who has many talents from God, but is no longer young, lacks courage and initiative. Be cautious in relations with Poles, and try to involve gradually (in work) Fr L(eo) H(aroshka)". As it happened, Father Haroshka was "involved" from the very beginning and had no need of prompting or encouraging from anybody. The same could be said about Father Tatarynovich who, despite his 49 years and more than twenty years interval since he left the seminary, had had the courage to resume the studies. When he arrived in Rome, he was seriously ill and did much of his writing lying in bed. While working on his doctoral thesis he found time to translate into Belarusian Henryk Sienkiewicz's famous novel *Quo vadis* (finished in 1947, but published only in 1956), and to prepare a new edition of the prayer book for the faithful of the Roman rite *Holas dushy* (Voice of the soul), published early in 1949. In 1950 Father Tatarynovich started a religious journal *Znic* (The Torch) which he edited single-handedly for the next quarter of a century. Also in 1950 thanks to his efforts the Vatican Radio began broadcasts in the Belarusian language. Those were hardly achievements of a man who was lacking courage and initiative. Fortunately Father Sipovich later modified his somewhat hasty opinion, which was due perhaps to a lack of experience rather than to anything else.

The war was over, but what followed could be hardly called peace. The world was split into two hostile camps, eyeing each other with suspicion and mistrust, careful at the same time not to do anything which might make the "cold war" hot again: the memory of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima was still fresh in everybody's mind. Between the two camps hung the "iron curtain" which prevented any normal flow of news and communication. In this confrontational situation Belarus, as part of the Soviet Union, found itself in the Moscow-controlled Communist camp, with its totalitarian regime, disregard of basic human rights and suppression of religion. Those Belarusians who as a result of the war found themselves west of the "Iron curtain", could not go back to their native country. The problem before them was not only how to survive, but also how to retain their national identity and make Belarus and its plight known in the free world.

One of the first tasks confronting the three priests was to establish contact with Belarusians in Italy. About 2000 Belarusians were serving in the Polish armed forces. Many of them used to come to Rome on leave individually or in groups. Father Sipovich was always willing to act as guide to groups of soldiers and, while showing them the sights of Eternal City, would delicately inquire whether there were any Belarusians among them... Many valuable contacts were made in this way, and

the news of a Belarusian priest spread throughout all units of the Polish armed forces. Apart from the soldiers there was also an unspecified number of Belarusian refugees scattered in various refugee camps, such as Bologna, Modena, Naples, Barletta-Trani, Galatone. There were also a few students in Rome. Visits to the camps were arranged. The material situation of the refugees and students was not very good, and Belarusian soldiers often came to the aid of their less fortunate compatriots, generally through the Belarusian Relief Committee (Comitato Caritativo Biancoruteno) which was established in Rome under the chairmanship of Father Haroshka.

There were also meetings in Rome. One of the earliest took place on 3 November 1945. at which Father Haroshka read a paper about problems of religious life among Belarusians at home and in exile; a member of the Polish armed Forces Victor Siankievich spoke about the fate of Belarusian soldiers who were obliged to serve in foreign armies; and Father Tatarynovich read a chapter from his translation of Henryk Sienkiewicz's *Quo Vadis* .

By the middle of 1946 it was becoming clear that the Belarusians' stay in Italy was temporary, as there were no conditions for permanent settlement. The three Belarusian priests had to face the problem of what to do next. One country which had a comparatively large group of Belarusians was France, where "Khaurus", a Belarusian organisation with its own bulletin and library etc had been in existence since 1932. During the war its chairman, Liavon Rydleuski, had taken part in the French resistance. As soon as the war was over, "Khaurus" resumed its activities. Also in Paris lived Mikola Abramtchyk, president of the Belarusian National Rada (Council) in Exile. Both Father Haroshka and Sipovich were in touch with him soon after the end of the war. As early as September 1945 he and Rydleuski made the first request for a Belarusian priest of the Byzantine rite in France. Father Tatarynovich belonged to the Roman rite, and in any case he had only just began his studies at the Oriental Institute. Sipovich had still to obtain his doctorate. There remained Father Leo Haroshka. The Oriental Congregation agreed, and by 24 October 1946 he was already in Paris. Thus the first Belarusian Catholic Mission to be officially approved by the Vatican was established.

Before leaving Rome Father Haroshka wrote on 8 October 1946 to the Oriental Congregation , requesting that Father Sipovich should be sent to Great Britain as soon as was practically possible. Britain was the country with the potentially largest Belarusian community. First of all there were numerous Belarusians who had served in the ranks of the Polish Army under the general British command. These were all to be transferred during the course of 1946 from Italy to Great Britain and, after demobilisation, given the opportunity for permanent settlement there. Their number soon was to be swelled by the arrival from Germany of displaced persons under the European Voluntary Workers scheme. Obviously there was a need for a priest there. This problem was the subject of discussion at meetings in Rome with Belarusian members of the Polish armed forces. One of them was Dr Vincent Zhuk-Hryshkievich, a historian well known in the pre-war Belarusian community in Vilna. He had been arrested by the communists in 1939. In 1941, as a Polish national, he was released and allowed to join the Polish army which was then being formed in the Soviet Union, from where, via Iran and Middle East, it reached Italy early in 1944. Towards the end of the war the Polish Command organised a number of high schools to give soldiers the opportunity to finish their secondary education, which had been interrupted by the war. Zhuk-Hryshkievich taught history at one such school in Modena. It so happened that there was a number of Belarusian students there who formed the nucleus of a Belarusian organisation. Soon after arriving to Britain Zhuk-Hryshkevich and a group of Belarusians met on 22

September 1946 in London and decided to found an Association of Belarusians (or, as they were called then, Whiteruthenians) in Great Britain which exists to this day. Zhuk-Hryshkievich was the Association's first chairman, and the secretary was one of the students, Victor Siankievich.

After the succesful defence of his doctoral thesis on 19 December there was nothing to keep Father Sipovich in Rome. On 1 January 1947 the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain wrote to Buchys and to the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, asking them to send Father Sipovich to England. Buchys initially ignored the letter. On 22 January Sipovich had an audience at the Oriental Congregation, at which he raised the question of his going to Great Britain. At the Congregation they promised to write about it to Buchys, which they did two days later, on 24 January. On receiving the letter from the Congregation, Buchys, ever obsequious before higher authorities, immediately changed his mind and gave his consent. He even wrote, or at least signed, a gracious letter in idiosyncratic Belarusian to the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain.

Before going to Britain, there were still a few things to do in Rome. Soon after his arrival in Paris, Father Haroshka held a consultation with members of the Belarusian community there. It was decided to send a delegation to Rome. Two persons were chosen: Father Francis Charniauski and Liavon Rydleuski. Father Sipovich was in charge of the delegation's programme in Rome. It was a success. Not only did the delegates have talks in the Vatican Secretariate of State and the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, but on 8 November they, accompanied by Fathers Tatarynovich and Sipovich, were received in private audience by Pope Pius XII. The delegates asked the Holy Father for a Belarusian bishop and help in training new priests. This was the first time that the Pope had received a Belarusian delegation as such. Belarusians had been received by the Pope before, e.g. Abrantovich in 1928 and Tsikota in 1935, but for reasons which had nothing to do with Belarus.

Less succesful was the attempt to solve the problem of ex-Druia Belarusian Marian Fathers and clerics who were in Poland. With Belarus firmly in Communist hands, there was no hope of them returning to Druia. Father Haroshka wrote at least twice to Buchys, asking him to let the Belarusian Fathers come to the West (Germany, Denmark, France), where there were large communities of Belarusian refugees without priests. He even suggested that those working in Harbin should be brought back to Europe. He received no reply.

On 22 December Father Sipovich wrote a letter to Buchys saying that there was an imbalance between the work done by Belarusian Marians in Poland, and the Polish Marians who came in their place to Druia. To put the balance right Sipovich made a few modest suggestions, namely that some young Belarusian Marian priests be allowed to come to Rome and given the opportunity to receive a proper academic theological education, while the others should be given the chance to do the same at Warsaw University. The letter caused a stir. It was discussed at a meeting of the General Council on 14 January 1947. Father Mroczek, a Pole, suggested that it should be removed from the files, "ascribing certain inconvenient written passages and words to youthful temperament (adscribendo aliqua inconvenientia scriptorum et verborum iuvenili temperamento)". His proposal was rejected, and on 22 January he wrote a letter to Buchys, in which he tried to prove that what Belarusians received was in excess of their contribution to the work of the Polish province, and advised Father Sipovich to show more restraint in the future.

Father Sipovich left Rome on 24 March 1947. Instead of proceeding directly to London as ordered, he stopped for over two weeks in France, staying with Father

Haroshka in Paris and visiting various Belarusian communities in that country. At last on Wednesday 9 April, he disembarked at Dover, and late in the evening of the same day reached London, his final destination. There he learned that he had missed Buchys by four days, who waited for him in vain for the whole week. On 25 April he received an irate letter from Rome, signed by Buchys and Secretary General of the Congregation, Joseph Vaitkievicius, threatening Sipovich with the censures reserved for runaway members... The letter ends thus: "I pray Almighty God, that He in his mercy may preserve you in the future from violating the Constitutions (of the Marian Congregation – *A.N.*) which you gave a solemn promise to observe".

## 6. London

The Lithuanians have their own parish in London. Their parish church of Saint Casimir was founded before the First World War. It is situated at the Oval, Hackney, which was considered one of the poorest parts of London. Since 1934 the Lithuanian Marian fathers had been in charge of the parish and the church. That is where Father Sipovich stayed during his first year in London. The rector of the church at that time was Father John Sakievicius, whom Sipovich knew from Rome.

The Belarusian community in Great Britain consisted for the most part of members of the Polish Armed Forces awaiting demobilisation. Some of them were in the 1st Polish Corps which was stationed in Britain during the war, but the bulk arrived in 1946 from Italy with the 2nd Polish Corps. There were also a few civilians, mainly students. Soon the ranks of Belarusians were increased by arrival of so-called "displaced persons", i. e. people who as result of the war found themselves in Germany and for political reasons were unable to return to their native country. The economic conditions in post-war Germany were not suitable for permanent settlement, so most of those people tried to emigrate, mainly overseas, to the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina. Some of them remained in Europe. The main countries which accepted displaced persons were France and Great Britain, the latter under the name of "European Volunteer Workers"(EVW). The new arrivals had to undertake the employment (in most cases manual labour) which was selected for them by the Ministry of Labour, and which they were not allowed to change without the express permission of that Ministry. In 1951 this restriction on employment was raised for those EVWs who had by then been three years in Great Britain. Initially they were housed in hostels, managed by the Ministry of Labour. These were usually were ex-army camps which were standing empty.

In London Father Sipovich was greeted by many friends and acquaintances from Italy. One of his first acts was to join the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain. At that time it was a well established and growing organisation. It held its first general meeting on 18-19 January 1947, at which the Council was elected, with its founders Vincent Zhuk-Hryshkievich and Victor Siankievich as chairman and secretary respectively. Since November 1946 the Association had been publishing its paper *Na shliakhu* (On the way). It also launched an appeal to collect funds to acquire a house of its own. In the meantime it enjoyed the hospitality of the Ukrainian Association which had just acquired a property at 49 Linden Gardens in the Notting Hill district of London.

The main problem for Father Sipovich, after he had paid visits to the Archbishop of Westminster and the Apostolic Delegate to present his credentials and obtain the necessary permission for pastoral work, was to find somewhere to hold regular services for the Belarusian community. The Lithuanian church was too far from where most Belarusians lived and not easily accessible by public transport. The Ukrainian priest, Father Jean, had similar problems. On Sunday 13 April, which was Easter according to the Julian ("old") calendar, the two priests celebrated the Liturgy together in the conference room of the Ukrainian House at Linden Gardens. The next day Father Sipovich celebrated the Liturgy alone and preached the sermon in Belarusian. A more or less permanent solution was not found till two months later, when the Oratorian fathers at Brompton Road in South Kensington offered him the use of their Little Oratory for regular services. It so happened that within walking distance from the Oratory there was a hostel where many demobbed Belarusians were living. Most of them were Orthodox. A few days before the first liturgy Father Sipovich spent an evening with them. He wrote in his diary: "12.6.47. 12.15 a.m. Just

came back from the N.S. Hostel, 50 Onslow Square, South Kensington. Talked with the boys about the need of unity among Belarusians. A few, hostile to my mission, did not come to the meeting. Thank God for everything. There is hope to start services, but one must act very cautiously and sensibly. Saint Peter, help me!"

Three days later there is the following entry: "15.6.47. My first Liturgy at the Brompton Oratory took place. There were about 15 persons present... I preached the sermon 'On the need of prayer'... After lunch there was a meeting of Belarusians at Linden Gardens. Mr Babik had an interesting talk about life in Soviet Belarus in 1920s and 30s... Mr Bulak (vice-chairman of the Belarusian Association – *A.N.*) tells me in confidence that the Orthodox priests are not pleased with my activity".

The priests in question belonged to the Polish Orthodox Church. Some of them had served as chaplains in the Polish army during the war, others arrived from Germany as EVWs and worked in factories. Many of these priests were Belarusian by origin but took no part in the life of the Belarusian community. Their superior was Archbishop Sava (Sovetov), a former Russian imperial army officer who after the First World War embraced the monastic life and became a bishop in the Polish Orthodox Church. During the Second World War he was chief Orthodox chaplain in the Polish army with the rank of general. As emigrés, he and his priests remained nominally in charge of a flock, whose views and national aspirations they did not share. Obviously they looked with suspicion at a young and energetic Catholic "Uniate" priest who from the day of his arrival was accepted as part of the Belarusian community.

Incidentally Father Sipovich, soon after his arrival, on 3 May 1947, paid a visit to Sava who, as he noted in his diary, received him politely.

Having settled the problem of the place of worship in London, Father Sipovich began visits to the hostels of European Voluntary Workers in search of Belarusians. The first visit on 5-6 July was to Bedhampton near Havant in Hampshire, where among various ethnic groups he found 20 Belarusians. On 13 August it was the turn of Market Harborough near Leicester. Then came Newark, Horsforth near Leeds and others. Usually the visits took place at weekends, with a Liturgy on the Sunday. After Liturgy there would be a meeting, at which Father Sipovich informed those present about Belarusian life in London, invited them to join the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain and form a local branch of this organisation. Incidentally, Father Sipovich, through the medium of the Apostolic Delegate in Great Britain, asked the Ministry of Labour to give him official permission to visit Belarusians in the EVW camps. The answer came on 21 July 1947, stating that the Ministry had no record of any workers of Belarusian origin in their hostels. The reason was that soon after the war, in accordance to the agreement between the Western powers and Soviet authorities, all refugees in Germany from the Soviet Union were due for deportation. Belarusians fell into this category. In fact a number of them was deported against their will to the Soviet Union where they ended up in prison camps. To avoid this fate many Belarusians hid their true nationality and declared themselves Poles, Latvians or Lithuanians. It was under this assumed nationality that they had come to Britain.

In London, in addition to his pastoral duties, Father Sipovich was active in the Association of Belarusians. He worked closely with Dr Zhuk-Hryshkievich, especially in the matter of representing Belarusians in dealings with the British authorities and various institutions, as well as in contacts with other refugee organisations (Polish, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Czech etc.). Sometimes things became hectic as in mid-July, when Mikola Abramtchyk, President of the Belarusian National Council in Exile, visited London for the first time. Here is the entry in the diary:

"13.VII.47. Sunday service at Brompton Oratory. About 30 people present... At 2 p.m. the conference of President M. Abramtchyk at Linden Gardens, and about 8 p.m. – evening in memory of Ianka Kupala (arguably the greatest Belarusian poet who died, probably murdered by the Soviet secret police, in 1942 – *A.N.*)... Everything was fine and pleasant, but tiring".

In 1948 various East European national associations formed the Central Coordinating Committee of Refugee Welfare Organisations (CCCRWO). Its chief aim was to represent the needs and defend the rights of the European Volunteer Workers (EVW) vis-à-vis the British authorities, help solve difficulties arising from restrictions on the choice of employment and the compulsory two-year contract etc. Father Sipovich represented the Association of Belarusians on this Committee from its beginning till 1960.

In the meantime Father Haroshka in Paris had organised a parish, established contacts with Belarusian communities in other places and launched a religious journal calledd *Bozhym shliakham* (On God's way). The first issue appeared in October 1947. Initially practically all the material was written by Father Haroshka under various pen-names. But from the third issue Father Sipovich became a regular contibutor to the journal. Other contributors followed, and *Bozhym shliakham* became one of the best and most serious Belarusian religious and cultural publications.

About the same time, in a letter dated 27 October 1947 the Apostolic Delegate informed Father Sipovich of the permission of the Oriental Congregation for his work to be called "Mission to the Catholic Whiteruthenians (i.e. Belarusians – *A. N.*) of the Byzantine Rite in England". Then the letter continued: "As there is not at the present moment in England a Russian Catholic priest of Byzantine Rite, you have the authority to concern yourself, practically, and pending other instructions, with Russians". Thus 27 October 1947 can be considered the official date of the establishment of the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine Rite in England. It was, after France, the second officially established Belarusian Mission. The pastoral care of Russian Catholics was entrusted to Sipovich without his ever having asked for it. Nevertheless he did what he could, giving spiritual assistance to those who were in need of it, which was after all his duty as a priest. Despite his limited involvement with Russians, Sipovich succeeded in acquiring among them a few valuable friends. One of them was Count George Benningsen, a Russian aristocrat of Swedish origin, a modest and good man, and a convinced Catholic. He had left Russia soon after the end of the First World War and the establishment of Soviet Communist rule in that country, and settled permamently in London. There he was one of the first members of the Society of Saint John Chrysostom, founded in London in 1926 with the aim of making Eastern Christianity known among English-speaking Catholics. Benningsen helped Father Sipovich with advice and valuable contacts. Incidentally it was he who arranged the meeting with Archbishop Sava. Later both men worked together for many years in the Central Coordinating Committee of Refugee Welfare Organisations.

Among other acquaintances at that early period mention should be made of Anne Christich, a Serbian Catholic (her mother was Irish) who had been active since the 1920s in the field of Christian Unity. She became a staunch friend and supporter of Father Sipovich.

But there were clouds gathering on the horizon. They came from Germany, where the bulk of Belarusian refugees was still living in the refugee camps. Among them were bishops of the Belarusian Orthodox Church who had escaped from the Soviets. During the German occupation in 1942, at a Synod in Minsk, the independence, or autocephaly, of Belarusian Orthodox Church had been proclaimed.

The bishops, most of whom were Russians, agreed to this independence unwillingly, under pressure from the nationally conscious faithful. In emigration, free from that pressure, in 1946 they joined the Russian Orthodox Church in Exile. In the confusion caused by their defection the Belarusian Orthodox community was split into two camps of those who remained faithful to the bishops, and those who refused to follow them.

The other division was on political grounds. Initially Belarusians in exile had one political representation in the form of the Council (Rada) of the Belarusian National Republic (abbreviated as BNR) which claimed continuity from the original Council set up in 1918, when Belarus was proclaimed independent. That independence was short-lived, and the Council went into exile, where it had remained ever since. Its centre after the war became Paris, where the Council's president, Mikola Abramtchyk, lived. The right of the BNR to represent Belarusians was contested by the Belarusian Central Council (Rada), or BCR, a body set up in Minsk with the consent of Germans towards the end of 1943. The President of the BCR was Radaslau Astrouski. He and the whole BCR left Belarus together with the Germans in the first days of July 1944. After the war he kept quiet for some time, but emerged again on the Belarusian political scene towards the end of 1947, when the "cold war" between the Western Powers and the Soviet Union began to warm up.

Among the BNR supporters there were people of different religious persuasions: Orthodox, Catholics, Evangelicals (Baptists) and even Muslims (Belarusian Tatars). It was the Orthodox of this group who, with the help of the Ukrainians, in 1948 succeeded in restoring the Belarusian Autocephalous Church. The BCR supporters, who were almost exclusively Orthodox, did not recognise this church. In this their position was no different from that of the former Belarusian bishops who defected to the Russian Expatriate ("zarubezhnaia") Orthodox Church. For this reason they were nicknamed by their opponents "zarubezhniki" or "expatriates". On the other hand the BCR supporters called the others "kryvichy", from the name of the largest of the three East Slavic tribes which formed the basis of the Belarusian nation. Some Belarusian authors suggested that, in order to avoid to be confused with Russians, Belarusians should adopt "kryvichy" as their national name. This suggestion, which might have been an interesting subject for academic discussion, had never been taken seriously by the majority of Belarusians. But the nickname stuck.

The first signs of division in the Belarusian community in Great Britain began to show towards the end of 1947. They manifested themselves first of all in the change of attitude of certain members of the Association of Belarusians. The final break came on 2 May 1948 at the Annual General Meeting, when a group of members, all supporters of the BCR, walked out. It was a heavy blow for the Association. Eventually it recovered and continued its work. But the harm was done, and, although some of those who walked out eventually came back, the former unity of the Belarusian community was lost.

Two months before those events, in March 1948, the supporters of the BCR founded their own organisation called "United Christian Whiteruthenian Workers in Great Britain", and began publishing the journal *Abjednannie* (Union), in which they attacked the management of the Association of Belarusians, targeting in particular Dr Vincent Zhuk-Hryshkievich and Father Ceslaus Sipovich. For the latter this was the first taste of the difficulties which lay ahead of him. It saddened him to see how the attitude of people could change overnight from friendly to hostile.

About the same time Father Sipovich suffered another setback. On 10 January 1948 he gave an interview to a correspondent of the Catholic weekly paper *Catholic*

*Herald* F.A. Fulford. Sipovich's English was limited at that time, and he, as he later admitted to friends, spoke part of the time in Italian, hoping that the correspondent who knew some Spanish would understand him... He remained pleased with the interview until, on Friday 16 January, he saw on the first page of the *Catholic Herald* an article "by a Staff Correspondent" with the sensational title "The Pope Has Sent A Russian Priest Here to Convert the Orthodox". The article began thus: "Fr Sipovich is in London at the desire of the Pope to convert some 1,000 Russians in this country. He wants English Catholics to help him". And then a little further down: "Romance attaches to Fr Sipovich's arrival here; he is part of the efficient machinery set up by the late Pope Pius XI to tackle the Russian question, and which the present Pope is developing through the now famous *Russicum* college in Rome...". Father Sipovich took it very hard. He wrote in his diary on the same day: "I received 100 copies of *Catholic Herald*, in which there is my photo and an article with the sad title: 'The Pope has sent a Russian priest here to Convert the Orthodox'. I am very upset because what is written there about my national identity does not correspond to the truth, and (because of) many other mistakes. I never thought that the *Catholic Herald* would print an article about me without letting me see it first. This is the greatest cross God has sent me since I came to England. Only God's providence can now put things right again. He is my only hope."

On 30 January the *Catholic Herald* printed Father Sipovich's reply, in which he tried to correct the false impression created by the article. Among other things he wrote: "...As regards conversion, both of Whiterutenians and other people, the policy of the Holy See is well known. Much as is desired the reunion of all Christians in one fold, cheap proselytism has always been condemned... I am not a Russian, but a Whiteruthenian (Byelorussian) priest of Byzantine Slavonic Rite, and I have been sent here to work for Byelorussians, and certainly not to force my ministry upon Byelorussians and Russians."

Unfortunately, as often happens in similar cases, many people who read the article might not have noticed Father Sipovich's reply, tucked away among other letters to the editor. Others ignored it deliberately, as did the editors of *Abjednannie* who printed Fulford's article in full in Belarusian translation under the title "Who is Father Sipovich and why did he come to London"[30], conveniently forgetting to mention Father Sipovich's reply.

The unexpected result of the article in the *Catholic Herald* was that many English Catholics who were interested in Eastern Christianity heard for the first time about Father Sipovich. Thus on the next day after the publication of the article, on 17 January he received a telegram from Cambridge inviting him to come to celebrate the liturgy and give a talk to a group of University students about Eastern Christianity. Two days later he received a letter from Donald Attwater (1892-1977), a well known author of several books on Eastern Christianity. On the same day he met Dom Bede Winslow (1888-1959), a Benedictine monk from Ramsgate, founder and editor of the *Eastern Churches Quarterly*... Other contacts followed, culminating on 6 May in the splendid gift of vestments for a Byzantine priest and deacon, chalice, paten and all furnishings for the Byzantine chapel.

The gift came just in time: two days later Father Sipovich moved to the place which was to become his residence for the rest of his life.

---

30 "Khto taki Aitsets Sipovich i chaho ion pryiekhau u Londan", *Abjednannie*, No.1, London, March 1948, p.15

## 7. The House of Mary

The tiny rectory of St Casimir's church could not accommodate with comfort more than two persons. The Lithuanian Marian Fathers, if they wanted to expand, needed a bigger house. A suitable property was found towards the end of 1947, a beautiful spacious house called "Belvedere" in the London suburb of North Finchley, built towards the end of the 19th century,with a large garden. It was decided from the beginning that there would be a place in the new house for Father Sipovich and for a Byzantine rite chapel. Most probably this was done at the insistence of Buchys who had his own plans.

The formalities were completed in April 1948. The two Lithuanian priests for reasons of their pastoral duties had to remain near the church of Saint Casimir. Thus it was Father Sipovich alone who moved to the newly acquired property. We find the following entry in his diary under 8 May 1948: "I am spending my first night in the newly acquired house 'Belvedere', Holden Avenue, London N.12. My only wish is that the house should be filled with holy men!" We may wonder whether he suspected that the house, which had been renamed "Marian House" in honour of Mary, the Mother of God, would become known among Belarusians and their friends throughout the world as the permanent seat of the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine rite.

The first concern of Father Sipovich was to fit out the chapel. A large bright room on the ground floor was chosen, with windows facing south. It was decided from the beginning that the chapel, which was dedicated to the Apostles Peter and Paul, should be in the best traditions of the Byzantine rite. All this, however, was in the future. On Sunday 16 May 1948, – Pentecost Sunday according to the Gregorian calendar, – the chapel, for the first time full of the faithful, had a very modest look. But there was a spirit of joy and gratitude among Belarusians who at last had their own place of worship.

Most of Father Sipovich's life had been spent in a community. Now for the first time he was left alone in a big house. Well, not exactly alone: a friend gave him a cockerel. It was a most appropriate gift, seeing that Father Sipovich had a particular devotion to Saint Peter. Unfortunately some neighbours objected to the bird's crowing at night. Also for the first time in his life Father Sipovich had to try his culinary skills with various results, as when he tried to fry an egg on the plate instead of a frying pan...

But the solitary life did not last long. By the end of May a Belarusian student came to live in Marian House. Some time later he was joined by two others, and in July came the first official candidate for the Marian Congregation.

In the autumn of 1948 the Association of Belarusians bought its own house which became the centre of national and social activities. Marian House remained the religious and to a great extent cultural centre. The Sunday and feastday liturgies were well attended, and there was a small but good church choir. Usually people remained after liturgy, especially in the summer, enjoying good weather in the garden, and a game of volleyball, in which Father Sipovich liked to join. He had the ability to get on with young people. But whatever he did, he always remained a priest first of all, trying to help others to take seriously their Christian vocation. Of particular value were the retreats, organised by Father Sipovich usually in Lent, and open to all – Catholic and Orthodox alike. For many participants who grew up during the war in an atmosphere far removed from religious influence, this was a new and profound experience.

Father Sipovich was tireless in encouraging young people to try to obtain a good education. There were a few Belarusian university students in London, but for the majority the way to higher education was closed because they did not qualify for study grants. In 1949 the opportunity arose for them to obtain their education at the Catholic University of Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium. This was due mainly thanks to the efforts of a few Belarusian refugee students, chief among them Doctor Barys Rahula, and the remarkable Belgian Benedictine priest, Robert van Cauwelaert, who became a staunch friend of Belarus and champion of the cause of Belarusian students. A meeting of representatives of Belarusian student groups and organisations from Belgium, Germany, France and England was held at Leuven in October 1949. Father Sipovich attended the meeting. In the years that followed he acted as a link between Leuven and the Belarusian community in England, helping to send a number of young Belarusians to that university.

Also at the October meeting in Leuven the Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run’" (pronounce "roon", meaning young shoots of winter crop) was founded, with Father Sipovich as ecclesiastical assistant. It was decided that the headquarters of the new organisation should be in London at Marian House. In the years that followed "Run’" was very active.

In the late 1940s and early 50s Byzantine rite Catholics were still a rarity in Western Europe. Therefore the establishment of a Byzantine rite centre in London attracted the attention of those interested in the Eastern Christianity and in the Union of Christians. There were many English vistors at Marian House, some of them becoming regular "parishioners". Father Sipovich was often invited to celebrate Liturgy and give talks by various groups such as university students, schools, convents etc. Some people were disappointed when they learnt that he was not a Russian, but his warm personality and friendliness usually won them over, and in many times they remained lifelong friends.

But the Russian problem was never far away. In summer 1949 Bishop Buchys was making canonical visits to the Marian religious houses in Great Britain. On Sunday 21 August he was scheduled to celebrate the Liturgy at Marian House. Belarusians, Catholics and Orthodox, turned up "en masse" only to hear the bishop in his sermon telling them that "Great, Little and White Russians" were one. To say that the listeners were indignant would be a gross understatement. This was the second serious setback for Father Sipovich after the notorious article in the *Catholic Herald*.

On the occasion of Buchys’s visit, the same paper published on 2 September 1949 an article entitled "Two Priests will work here among Russian Orthodox". It was written again by the "staff correspondent" who, among other things, had this to say: "Two Russians, formerly of the Orthodox Church, now Catholic priests of the Slav Byzantine rite, are shortly arriving in London from Rome to help explain the Catholic viewpoint on reunion to thousands of Russian Orthodox now exiled here. Announcement was made by Mgr. Francis Bucys, titular bishop of Olympus, and Superior General of the Marian fathers, himself an Oriental prelate, who is now visiting England. Said the 77-year-old Bishop, a linguist of repute: ‘The work of evangelising Russia is in a state of preparation, but actual good and efficacious work can be, and is being, done outside Russia – among the emigrants’... The two priests, both members of the Marian Congregation, are to reside at Marian House, Finchley, London, along with Fr. C. Sipovich, also a Slav-Byzantine priest, who serves an Eastern Rite chapel there. But whereas, as Bishop Bucys explained, Fr. Sipovich has been doing excellent work among his own people, that is, the White Ruthenians or Bielorussians now in this country, the two newcomers are to expand the work to

embrace the larger number of Russians from 'Great Russia' proper". In other words, Father Sipovich and his Belarusians were all right, but the time had come to do serious work... This may explain why the Byzantine rite chapel at "Marian House" was planned even before its purchase.

The Oriental Congregation was not in favour with Buchys's idea of having one Byzantine rite mission for Belarusians and Russians, as can be seen from Cardinal Tisserant letter to him of 18 February 1948: "Since there are differences of various nature between Belarusians and Russians, it is clear that it would be better to keep the two institutions separate, even if they use the same chapel"[31].. Father Sipovich, referring to this letter wrote to Buchys on 7 April 1948: "Indeed from my own experience I know how difficult it is for one and the same person to carry out simultaneously this apostolic work: often the exaggerated nationalism from both sides is a great obstacle. For this reason I wish that a Russian priest could come as soon as possible to London and dedicate himself exclusively to the work among Russians". Then he continues: "I wish to ask that neither the Marians nor the Sacred Oriental Congregation should call me (to be appointed) 'For Belarusians and Russians' or something similar. I am debtor to all, and according to my strength and conscience I wish to serve all (in a way that) the love of one's native country should not be an impediment for us to exhort all to the heavenly fatherland, yet in the present circumstances if Belarusians knew that I have been appointed also for Russians, they would have cause to act against my Mission. At the present time all know me as a Belarusian priest (who has been sent) for Belarusians; at the same time no one of my compatriots could be 'scandalised' if I as a Catholic priest had dealings also with Russians". Finally he adds: "Despite all these differences I think it possible to have a common Byzantine-Slavonic chapel for Belarusians and Russians in the house of the Marian Fathers".

The decision to send the two Russian priests to London was Buchys's alone. The priests in question were Fathers Andrew Katkov and George Brianchaninov, both members of the Marian Congregation and ordained in Rome in 1944. They both came in 1938 to Rome from Harbin, where they were educated in the school founded by Father Abrantovich and the Belarusian Marian Fathers from Druia.

The reaction of Father Sipovich to the announcement of Buchys was mixed. In principle he was in favour of a separate Russian Mission with its own priest. As the date of the arrival of the two priests was drawing near he wrote to Buchys on 7 February 1950: "Until now I have been charged with the pastoral care of Russians in England. After the arrival of the (Russian) Fathers I shall ask the Oriental Congregation to relieve me of this duty and leave me (in charge of) the spiritual care of Belarusians. In my opinion the best solution would be as follows: to establish a Russian Catholic Mission in England and leave the Belarusian Mission as it is. The address may be the same, but the spheres of work different... Fathers Andrew and George are pupils of the Belarusian Fathers... This fact alone should put them under an obligation to be loyal with respect to the Belarusian Catholic Church... I admit that I am not pleased with the arrival of Father Andrew. He is a great individualist and nationalist; moreover he is secretive and very suspicious. I have never succeeded in talking with him openly, in a brotherly manner...".

The two priests arrived in April 1950. Father Sipovich organised on Sunday 23 April a small reception in their honour, which was duly reported in the *Catholic Herald*. On the surface the relations between the three priests were good, but

---

[31] "Siccome tra i Bianco-russi e Russi corrono delle differenze di varia natura, é chiaro che sarebbe bene tenere le due opere distinte, sia pure servendosi della medesima capella".

difficulties surfaced soon afterwards. The Russians arrived without any letters of recommendation from Buchys or the Oriental Congregation. When they asked the Catholic Commitee for European Volunteer Workers for permission to visit workers' hostels, they received a reply from the Secretary, in which he said: "I quite realise that you have been sent here to do work under obedience. It is precisely for that reason that the more correct procedure would have been for the Marian Congregation to approach the Authorities in England before sending you over... Therefore if your Congregation wishes you to work in this country I would suggest that an approach be made from Rome to His Eminence Cardinal Griffin". They next approached the Apostolic Delegate, who suggested: "In my opinion it would be useful to refer the question to the Oriental Congregation (Sarebbe utile, al mio parere, di riferire la questione alla Congr. Orientale)". That was the situation six months after their arrival. Lacking official recognition, the Russian priests tried to do something on their own initiative. They founded what they called grandly the "Russian Catholic Centre of Byzantine Slavonic Rite in Great Britain", with its address at Marian House. Father Sipovich was not overjoyed, but said nothing at first, until an incident occured which made it impossible to keep silent. One day there was a meeting of the "Russian Centre" at Marian House. In the common room, where the meeting took place, there were usually various Belarussian, Russian and English newspapers. Someone before the meeting collected all Belarusian papers and hid them away, presumably so as not to hurt the delicate feelings of Russians. Father Sipovich, who had been out, came back sooner than expected and saw what had been done. An unpleasant situation arose. This and other similar incidents eventually convinced Father Sipovich that it was a mistake to have Russian and Belarusian pastoral centres in one house. He explained this to Buchys in the autumn when he was in Rome, only to be accused of exaggerated Belarusian nationalism. Father Sipovich took it very hard. During the annual retreat which he made in Rome in the first week of October 1950, there are the following notes: "Would it be against the perfect obedience: 1) to expose one's own reasons to the superior; 2) try to induce the superior to a <u>greate</u>r good; this greater good being supported with various serious reasons and the judgement of one's confessor; 3) to appeal from the lower to higher superior, from Father General to the Holy See (when the matter is very grave)".

Father Sipovich wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Oriental Congregation, Cardinal E. Tisserant on 23 October in which he explained the difficulties which had arisen in his work due to the arrival of the two Russian priests. He says: "These Fathers came to London under religious obedience, but... it seems to me that our Superior General, H. E. Mgr Buchys did not take into account certain circumstances". Then he goes on to explain those circumstances:

1. No consideration had been given to whether Russian Catholic Mission in England was necessary, and if so, how to organise it.

2. No consideration at all was given how to coordinate two different kinds of work in the same house and in the same small chapel. Buchys wrote an instruction on how the three priests should behave, but this instruction had no effect on the nationalist misunderstandings which are being painfully felt also in the religious sphere.

3. For many Orthodox Belarusians who frequented Marian House the presence of Russian priests would furnish arguments against the Catholic Church under the pretext that the latter favoured the Russians. This was at a time when the Belarusian Orthodox Church was being reestablished: in the summer Bishop Basil (Tamashchyk) visited England and established a Belarusian Orthodox parish in Bradford.

4. Buchys sent the two Russian Fathers without asking the advice of Cardinal Griffin (Archbishop of Westminster) and Archbishop Godfrey, the Apostolic Delegate.

5. Finally one must keep in mind that the same Fathers Brianchaninov and Katkov came to London against their own wish and under the grave pressure of obedience, and without the explicit authority of the Oriental Congregation.

In the end Father Sipovich decided not to sent this letter, as can be seen from a handwritten note attached to it. All the problems, however, enumerated in it were discussed with Cardinal Tisserant at an audience on 3 November 1950.

Eventually a compromise was reached which satisfied nobody. Sipovich wrote to Tatarynovich on 3 January 1951: "At last Roma locuta est (Rome has spoken) in the matter of our missions. Father G. Brianchaninov remains in London, Father Katkov is going to Australia. This is for the moment *de jure*. My Mission remains as it has been, but the chapel etc. are common. Obviously, the hands of both of us are tied, the question is for how long? It seems that Father George will remain here for at least one year, and after that he also will go to Australia. Such a state of affairs is not the worst, but there is no doubt that our respected General (i.e. Buchys – *A.N.*) has been the cause of worsening my position in London".

Tatarynovich answered on 22 January 1951: "I sympathise with you for still having to carry the burden which you wanted to shed. They departed from here in a triumphant mood (both Branchaninov and Katkov were in Rome towards the end of 1950 – *A.N.*). Katkov is so proud of his Russia, even the Communist one; in a conversation he said disparagingly about us, that we were sitting pretty under the German tail... (meaning that the Belarusian national movement was fostered and protected by the Germans – *A.N.*)".

Father Katkov did not leave till the end of the year. In the meantime the situation did not improve. On 5 May 1951 Sipovich wrote to Buchys: "I had hopes that with the help of God the Belarusian Catholic Mission in London would become the nucleus of the Belarusian religious revival and the beginning of a Belarusian Marian monastery. One must state with sadness that instead of further development this nucleus is doomed to die. Today at Marian House there are Divine services and concelebrations, at which however there are no Belarusians or Russians present, and they will not be here so long as two different meals are being cooked in one pot. Personally I have nothing against Fathers George and Andrew. They came here under obedience, and we all do everything possible to promote harmony and brotherly love among us. However the best personal relations among us are not a guarantee of achieving the ends of our Missions".

Buchys died on 25 October 1951. After his death and the departure of Katkov the situation eased somewhat. Father Branchaninov left England only in February 1956 after unsuccesful attempts to buy a house for the Russian Catholic Mission in London.

Also in 1951 Nicholas (Stanislaus) Bahovich came to London. He was a Marian lay brother from Druia who had gone to Harbin in 1933 and stayed there for 18 years. He was a witness to the arrest on 22 December 1948 of Fathers Andrew Tsikota, Joseph Hermanovich and Thomas Padziava by the Chinese Communists who handed them over to the Soviet authorities. In the Soviet Union they were sentenced to 25 years forced labour. Brother Nicholas and another lay brother were allowed to leave China free. In London this pious and humble man became invaluable around the house. No one ever saw him idle. All moments free from work he was spending in

prayer in the chapel. His only relaxation was the garden, and it was there that he was found dying on 17 August 1980.

Before coming to London, Brother Nicholas spent some time in Rome where he had the opportunity to make a report on the fate of Belarusian priests to Buchys who was instrumental in sending them to Harbin. Buchys was a strange man. A scholar and linguist of some repute, pious and unreservedly devoted to the Catholic Church which he understood in a somewhat abstract way, he was at the same time obsequious before higher authority and set in his ideas which he changed with difficulty. He was obsessed with the idea of the "conversion" of Russia, for which he was ready for any sacrifice. The trouble was that it was others whom he sacrificed. When sending Belarusian priests to Harbin to "convert" Russians (who were Christians after all), he compared himself to Saint Ignatius Loyola who sent Saint Francis Xavier to preach the Gospel of Salvation to people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. He never understood Belarusians and their national aspirations, and showed an astonishing indifference to their spiritual needs. For him they were just Russians. Whatever may be the final verdict on the work and achievements of this man (the judgement of him as a person must be left to God), the Belarusians have no reason to be grateful to him.

## 8. "Peoples of Russia"

In 1951 there were six Belarusian Catholic priests in Western Europe. Four of them belonged to the Byzantine rite. They were: Leo Haroshka in France, Ceslaus Sipovich in England, Michael Maskalik in Northern and Uladzimier Salaviej in Southern Germany. Of the Roman rite priests, Father Francis Charniauski worked in Northern France and Peter Tatarynovich remained in Rome,where he was in charge of Belarusian programmes on Vatican Radio and published a religious quarterly journal *Znic*. In addition there were two students in Rome studying for the priesthood. Unfortunately there was no one in charge who could coordinate their work and represent them and their needs before the higher church authorities. During the first study week of the Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run’" on 16-21 July 1951 at Chevetogne this problem was the subject of discussion between the priests who took part in the Week and Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans who was also present there. The result of these discussions was the petition on 11 September 1951 of Belarusian priests to the Holy Father, asking him to appoint Sloskans the Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians of both rites. Bishop Sloskans (1893-1981) was a Latvian who came from the province of Latgalia wich has a mixed Latvian-Belarusian population. It was said that his mother was Belarusian. In any case he spoke Belarusian fluently. Educated in the Mahilou Archdiocesan Seminary in St Petersburg, he was ordained priest in 1917 and then worked in the parishes in St Petersburg, Moscow and Vitebsk (Belarus). In 1926 he was secretly consecrated Bishop by d’Herbigny and appointed Apostolic Administrator of Mahilou and Minsk. A year later he was arrested by the Soviet authorities and spent the next seven years in prison camps (including the notorious Solovki) or in exile in Siberia. In 1933 he was exchanged by the Latvian government for a Communist. After the Second World War he found himself in the West, and eventually settled at the Kaiserberg (Mont Céar) Benedictine Abbey at Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium. He was a holy man in the true sense of the word. The years of imprisonment, when he had to bear witness to Christ alongside Orthodox bishops and priests, followed by life in exile among ordinary Russians, gave him a profound knowledge and love of the Russian people and strengthened desire for the Union of Catholics and Orthodox. This did not prevent him from treating with equal love and respect other people, including Belarusians. A man of peace, far removed from politics, it pained him to see national antagonisms and conflicts.

Incidentally Cardinal Tisserant was of the same opinion as the Belarusian priests. On 28 April 1951 Sipovich wrote to Tatarynovich that he had seen and read a private letter of Tisserant of 4 April to a correspondent in England. In it the Cardinal agreed that having two missions at Marian House had created an impossible situation, and said that he wished to remove the Russians. Then Sipovich continued: "Secondly, and more importantly, he has expressed an opinion in favour of uniting all Belarusians of Eastern and Latin rites under the jurisdiction of the Oriental Congregation, and his intention to speak about this to Monsignor Tardini before writing a formal letter. He makes mention of Bishop Sloskans who could be the Apostolic Visitor for all. He says literally: ‘I think you are right when you say that it would be advantageous for Belarusians to be under one jurisdiction. It seems to me that Mgr Sloskans could be visitor for all’"[32].

---

[32] "Je pense que vous avez raison, lorsque vous dites qu’il serait avantageux pour les Blanc-Ruthenes d’être tous sous la même jurisdiction. Il me semble que Mgr Sloskans pourrait être visiteur pour tous".

Six months had passed since the Belarusian priests' letter and there was no answer from Rome. On 25 March 1952 a ceremony was held to bless the new Belarusian students' house at Leuven (Louvain). The blessing was performed by Cardinal Eugene Tisserant who came from Rome specially for this occasion. The Belarusian priests Sipovich, Haroshka and Charniauski, who were also present, took this opportunity to raise once again the question of the Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. On the following day they met Bishop Sloskans, who told them that on 9 January he had been called to the Apostolic Nunciature in Brussels and asked whether he would agree to become Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians of both rites. Sloskans gave his consent but after that heard nothing. The priests also had a meeting with Cardinal Tisserant who said that, while himself in favour of one Apostolic Visitor for both rites, in the case of the Roman (Latin) rite the consent of the Consistorial Congregation was needed.

All this Father Sipovich described to Father Tatarynovich in a letter of 31 March 1952.

After such great expectations, the letter of Bishop Sloskans, dated 13 June 1952 to Sipovich, Haroshka and other priests, must have been something of a shock. In it the Bishop informed them that on 24 May the Holy Father appointed him Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians and Russians of the Byzantine (Eastern) rite in Western Europe, except Italy. This news was conveyed to him in a letter from the Oriental Congregation of 29 May. Since the letter said nothing about his competences, he asked that his appointment should be kept secret for a moment.

This was not what Belarusians expected. They were disappointed that the Roman rite faithful were not included, and did not in the least like being placed "in one basket" with the Russians, foreseeing nothing but difficulties and complications.

Their forebodings proved right sooner that they expected. On 7 July 1952, the feast of SS Cyril and Methodius according to the Roman calendar, Pope Pius XII published his Apostolic letter "Sacro vergente anno", directed "to all peoples of Russia (ad universos Russiae populos)" and consecrating them to the Immaculate Heart of Mary the Mother of God.

The letter caused consternation among Belarusians and Ukrainians. It was not the consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary that made them anxious, but the equivocal terminology used by the Pope. Indeed "peoples of Russia" was very reminiscent of the old imperial Russian doctrine of one Russian nation consisting of three branches, namely Great Russians (i. e. Russians in the proper sense of the word), Little Russians (Ukrainians) and White Russians (Belarusians). In the light of this doctrine, which was shared by most Russians irrespective of their political orientation, Belarusians and Ukrainians who affirmed separate national identities and the right to an independent existence were nothing but separatists who wanted to shatter the unity of the Russian nation. The terminology used by the Pope in his Letter seemed to give support to this point of view. Indeed that is how it was understood by Russians, as could be seen from the reports in their press. Thus the Brussels-based Russian Catholic journal *Russki Katolicheski Vestnik* (Russian Catholic Messenger) wrote in its July-August issue that the Papal letter was addressed to the "Russian peoples". Incidentally in the same issue Russians jumped the gun by announcing the appointment of Bishop Sloskans as Apostolic Visitor for Russians alone.

The reaction of the Ukrainian and Belarusian press to the Papal letter was critical, ranging from perplexity to hostility. It was up to the clergy to start a "damage limitation exercise". Bishop Ivan Buchko, the Apostolic Visitor for Ukrainians in Western Europe, openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Apostolic Letter, but

appealed to the people to remain faithful to the Catholic Church. In England the Ukrainian priests at a synod in Manchester signed a joint letter to the Holy Father in which, while affirming their loyalty, they criticised the Papal Letter for its equivocal terminology and historical inaccuracies.

Belarusian priests were faced with two problems: to try to clarify the competence of the Apostolic Visitor; and give an answer to the Papal "Letter to the peoples of Russia". The first problem was discussed during the second study week of "Run’" on 20-27 July in London (the second problem had not as yet "sunk in"). A draft text of the petition to the Holy Father was agreed. The final text, dated 8 September 1952, was signed by Leo Haroshka, Ceslaus Sipovich, Michael Maskalik, Peter Tatarynovich, Francis Charniauski and the chaplain of the Belarusian students at Leuven University, Robert van Cauwelaert, O.S.B. In the petition they asked the Holy Father to extend the faculties of the Apostolic Visitor to include also Belarusian Roman (Latin) rite Catholics "who are dispersed throughout the world and for the most part deprived of spiritual care". Then they continued: "There remains another very grave problem, namely that of one person having jurisdiction for two hostile nations, i. e. Russians and Belarusians... which for many reasons seems to us inconvenient. It is generally known that Russians have their own political aims ("one and indivisible empire") with regard to other nations, whom they have deprived of their freedom, and at the same time call ‘extreme separatists’ those who try even by legal means to oppose their policy. In these circumstances the appointment of one Visitor for the two peoples seems to favour the political aims of Russians. What is certain is that the leaders and active members of Belarusian communities use this argument against us, the few Belarusian priests, and against the Holy See. Hence such a nomination of the Apostolic Visitor, rather than producing the desired good, has become a cause of discord and contention in religious matters between the two nations.

The language and character of Belarusians differ considerably from Russians... Thus different methods should be applied when dealing in spiritual matters among Belarusians and Russians, which is hardly possible so long as one and the same person is appointed for both (nations)".

There was no joint Belarusian reaction to the Papal "Letter to the peoples of Russia". Father Haroshka wrote his own letter on 25 November 1952 directly to the Holy Father, in which he pointed out the inappropriateness of the expression "peoples of Russia". He then continued: "The Belarusian faithful consider Your Holiness as common father of all people. Just as in a family the father calls all his sons by their proper name, in the same way Belarusians are certain that Your Holiness, when addressing Belarusian people, would use the proper name of this people". He then suggested that in order to repair the damage, the Pope should appoint a separate Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians of both rites.

Shortly afterwards Father Haroshka received a terse note from Cardinal Tisserant, telling him in the future to use proper channels, i.e. send his letters to the Oriental Congregation which may eventually pass them on to the Pope with its own comments.

Sipovich also wrote a letter on 6 December 1952, but, unlike Father Haroshka, he did not sent it directly to the Pope, but to the Apostolic Delegate, asking him to make use of it as he thought fit. It was more of a report than a letter, and comprised texts (in English or Italian translations) of the relevant articles from the Belarusian press, as well as description of the reaction to the papal letter of Belarusians in England. Here are a few extracts: "After the publication of the Apostolic Letter to the

peoples of Russia the doors of many Orthodox brethren became closed to the Catholic priest. In Manchester the Belarusian community refused even to see me, and some members of the Association of Belarusians (of which I am also a member) have written offensive letters against the Catholic Church, the Pope and against me... In Bradford... they showed me the Holy Father's "Letter to the peoples of Russia" with anger and sarcasm, repeating that injustice has been done to Belarusian people... No Orthodox Belarusian comes any longer to my chapel at Holden Avenue. The Catholic faithful, disconcerted, say nothing offensive against the Holy Church, but feel oppressed by the Holy Father's Letter".

The main causes of discontent, according to Sipovich, were: the inappropriate antiquated terminology; historical inaccuracy; the reaction of Russians who interpreted the Papal terminology as approval of their political views; and the comments on the letter in the official Vatican paper *L'Osservatore Romano*, which made the already confused situation even worse.

Father Sipovich's final judgement on the document is of considerable importance. After quoting the *L'Osservatore Romano* of 3 August 1952, where the "Letter to Peoples of Russia" was described as "An Apostolic Letter which stands out as one of the most extraordinary religious events in the Church and the whole of Christendom", he continues: "It pains me (to say) that those to whom the letter was supposed to be addressed, think otherwise. All Belarusian and Ukrainian journals acknowledge the great authority of the Pope, and at the same time they underline their disappointment with a document which should have been a milestone in the religious orientation of the Slavs. In all my priestly conscience I can say that in my opinion this letter 'to the peoples of Russia' will for many years constitute the greatest obstacle for nearly 30 million Ukrainians and 10 million Belarusians for their return to union with the See of Rome. And here lies a cause of profound sorrow for us priests, unworthy but faithful servants of the Catholic Church which gave us the authority to work for the salvation of souls".

Father Sipovich's was the most thorough and profound analysis of the Pope's "Letter to the peoples of Russia" and its consequences. Writing it did not come easily to him, and one can feel that considerations of a pastoral nature and justice for his people were foremost in his mind. Coming from a comparatively young and unknown priest it required considerable moral courage, because at that time any criticism of the Pope was received with ill grace. To soften the effect his letter might produce on those who might read it, he finished it with affirmation of unreserved loyalty to the Holy Church and the Successor of Saint Peter.

Incidentally in his letter to Father Tatarynovich of of 16 September, Father Sipovich makes the following comment on the Papal "Letter to the Peoples of Russia": "It is difficult to find anything more inept during the last fifty years of Pontifical history".

Bishop Sloskans in a letter to Father Haroshka on 5 December 1952 wrote: "It is against my principles ever to show the Pope our dissatisfaction or fears". He did not see the need to change the terms of his appointment as Visitor for both Belarusians and Russians, and was not pleased with the criticisms of the Pope's "Letter to the Peoples of Russia". Personally he did not find anything wrong in the letter, on the contrary he approved of it. According to him, the chief "culprit" responsible for the letter was none other than the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, who in her apparition at Fatima in 1917 had requested that Russia should be consecrated to Her Immaculate Heart. According to Bishop Sloskans, She never

defined the exact limits of the territory to which the name "Russia" could be applied... He concludes his letter as follows: "The time has come for me personally to defend the Holy Father, because the Ukrainians and Belarusians have begun to discredit the Vicar of Christ".

Father Haroshka answered him on 8 December. Among other things he wrote: "It is our duty to tell the cardinals and especially the Holy Father all that ails us. To whom should we address our religious problems if not to him?!". With regard to the Fatima apparition he had this to say: "In my opinion there is nothing more dangerous than when evil human intentions are hidden under the cover of holiness; or, as in this case; under the authority of the Mother of God and the Holy Father. Where, when and in what apparition did the Mother of God use equivocal political terminology? Does the Mother of God know only Russia, and not know Belarus and Ukraine?" Finally: "With regard to your last remark that Belarusians and Ukrainians have begun to discredit the Vicar of Christ, there must be some misunderstanding, because the aim of their letters, reports and even protests... is not to discredit, but to defend the authority of the Holy Father before those who serve Russian interests, and prevent them from using him for their dishonest political ends".

Despite this sharp exchange of views, Bishop Sloskans and Father Haroshka remained friends.

True to the age-long habit of never acknowledging its own mistakes, the Vatican did not reply to the petitions and letters of Belarusian priests. But there were signs that their demands were noticed. Sloskans was not relieved of the post of Visitor for Russians, but his appointment was allowed to fall into abeyance, especially since Russians themselves were not too keen to have him. On the other hand he played an increasingly important role in the religious life of the Belarusian community. In the beginning of 1953 there at last appeared in *Bozhym shliakham* and *Znic* the announcement of Sloskans's apppointment as Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians (without any mention of Russians). On 14 February the Consistorial Congregation, on behalf of the Pontifical Council for Emigrés (established by Pope Pius XII in 1952), appointed Sloskans Director of Missionaries (chaplains) to Belarusian Emigrés in Western Europe (Director Missionariorum Alboruthenorum in Europa ad Occidentem versa), thus giving him authority also over Belarusians of the Roman (Latin) rite. On the occasion of his 60th birthday a special article on him appeared in *Znic* , and *Bozhym shliakham* began to publish Sloskans's memoirs (edited by Father Haroshka) from 1920s and early 30s, i.e. the period covering his pastoral work as priest and bishop in Belarus, as well as his imprisonment and exile.

In 1954 Father Francis Charniauski moved from France to Belgium, where he stayed at the Mont César Abbey in Louvain together with Bishop Sloskans, acting as his Belarusian secretary and at the same time doing pastoral work among the Belarusians in Belgium and Northern France. Belarusian Catholic students at Louvain University used to come to serve at the Bishop's daily mass.

Bishop Sloskans was present at most study weeks of the Belarusian Catholic University Union"Run'". He took a keen interest in the Belarusian students training for the priesthood. In 1960 Bishop Sloskans played a crucial role in elevating Father Sipovich to the bishopric.

There was another sign of changing attitude towards Belarusians. In 1953 a young Belarusian from London decided to become a priest and asked the Oriental Congregation to be admitted to the Greek College in Rome, which had strong historical links with Belarus from the 16th century right up to the beginning of the 19th, when the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church was suppressed by Russians. The

Congregation agreed. This was the first time since 1929 that a Belarusian Byzantine rite candidate had not been sent to the Russicum.

### 9. "New Druia"

On 5 November 1952 Father Sipovich wrote the following letter to the General Council of Marian Congregation:

"After careful consideration before God, having in mind the greater glory of God and of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as well as the better attainment of the aims of our Congregation among Belarusians who now live in exile, namely to present the possibility (of the establishment) of the religious House of Belarusian Marian Fathers (ut possibilitas domui religiosae Marianorum Alboruthenorum praeberetur), the undersigned proposes the following.

Acquisition, i. e. purchase, for the Belarusian Mission of the house situated at Holden Avenue, London N.12 bearing the name 'Marian House', together with the garden and all furniture for the price of £8200.

The conditions of the purchase are: the sum of £4000 should be paid within three years from the time of approval of the proposal by the General Council. After the sum of £4000 has been paid to the Lithuanian Fathers of our Congregation, the title of the ownership of 'Marian House' formally passes to the Belarusian Mission. The remaining £4200 should be paid during the next three years, together with interest of 2.5% for the sum not paid.

After the purchase of 'Marian House' the ownership of the Byzantine-Slavonic chapel passes definitely to the Belarusian Mission".

The idea of buying Marian House from the Lithuanians had germinated in Sipovich's mind earlier, but he did not disclose it, except to a few friends whom he could trust. On 11 September 1952 he wrote to Father Haroshka: "It is necessary to buy Marian House for the Belarusian Mission. It is a very important but difficult task".

There is no record of the reaction of the Superior General and the Council to this bold proposal. And it was bold, considering that at that time the Belarusian Marian "community" consisted of one priest with no funds except a small annual grant from the Oriental Congregation, and no immediate prospects for this situation to improve. But that was very much in the character of Father Sipovich, who, if anything, was a man of vision and courage.

There was, however, a flaw in the proposal which was likely bound to create in the future serious difficulties, or even a conflict.

Two important points can be distinguished in the letter, namely:

1.The house is to be bought for the Belarusian Mission;

2. This is being done in pursuance of the aims of the Marian Congregation with regard to Belarusians, namely in order eventually to establish a religious house of Belarusian Marian Fathers.

The Belarusian Catholic Mission in England was established to provide pastoral care of Belarusian Catholics of Byzantine rite in that country. The head (or Rector) of the Mission was at that time Father Ceslaus Sipovich who happened to be also a member of the Congregation of Marian Fathers. There is nothing in the terms of his appointment which said that his successor should also belong to the Marian congregation. Thus if the house belonged to the Mission and Belarusian Marian Fathers succeeded in establishing their religious community in it, what would happen if the next rector of the Mission did not belong to their community? On the other hand if the house belonged to the Marian Fathers, the Mission could find itself

without a house. Thus the proposal of Father Sipovich presupposes that the rector of the Belarusian Mission in England would always be a member of the Marian Congregation.

Having received no answer for nearly one year, Sipovich renewed his request in a modified form. On 30 October 1953 in a letter to the Superior General he wrote: "I have maintained and continue to maintain that the cohabitation and cooperation of two institutions, namely Belarusian and Russian, in one house is practically impossible... To resolve this question I proposed to consider Marian House as the nucleus of a Religious House of Belarusian Marian Fathers (Ad solvendam questionem proposui 'Marian House' qua cellulam Domus Religiosae Marianorum Alboruthenorum considerare), and as such to purchase it from the Lithuanian Marian Fathers during the period of four years for the sum of £8200. If this is approved, in order to achieve this end, I humbly ask the Superior General and General Council for permission to collect money".

This time he did not have to wait long for the answer. On 31 December 1953 the following letter, signed by the Superior General Wladyslaw Mroczek and Secretary General John Sakievicius, was sent to Father Sipovich: "To satisfy your request of 30 October 1953, after having obtained consent of our Council on 25 November 1953, we grant you permission to acquire the London property of the Lithuanian Province, called 'Marian House' for the purpose of establishing there in the future a religious house of Belarusian Marian Fathers (ut ibi in futuro Domus Religiosa Marianorum Alboruthenorum fundetur), and in order to achieve this end we give you leave to collect money, provided that everything is done in accordance with the requirements of the norms of the Sacred Canons and our Constitutions".

The last two documents make it clear that the proposed purchase of Marian House was an internal affair between the Belarusian and Lithuanian Marian Fathers: the Belarusian Catholic Mission is not even mentioned.

Having received the permission of his superiors, Father Sipovich applied himself with his usual energy to raise the necessary sum of money. A "Whiteruthenian (i.e. Belarusian – *A.N.*) Catholic Mission Fund" was founded under the patronage of Cardinal Bernard Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster. An Honorary Committee was formed with members drawn from among Belarusians and their friends from different countries, and headed by Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans. Subscription lists were printed, with short explanatory notes in English, French and Belarusian. Here is the English text: "Founded in 1947, the Whiteruthenian (Byelorussian) Catholic Mission has carried out many good works of an apostolic, charitable and cultural nature among Whiteruthenians (Byelorussians) exiled in Gt. Britain, and until now these works have been carried out under the burden of our not having a regular House for this purpose. Therefore with the blessing of the church authorities we have started in this year of 1954 – which is dedicated to Our Lady – a fund for the acquisition of premises to be known – likewise in honour of Our Holy Mother – MARIAN HOUSE. For this purpose it is necessary to raise the sum of £8000. Whiteruthenians (Byelorussians), exiled from their native land, cannot by themselves reach this figure, and we therefore address our appeal to all our many friends who understand our needs, to help us in this charitable work. For all benefactors of Marian House Mass will said each year on the Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady, August 15th".

The texts in two other languages are the same, except that in the Belarusian version the appeal for help is directed "to our Belarusian countrymen and all those who understand the needs of Belarusian life in exile".

Apart from this official fund-raising campaign, Father Sipovich appealed personally to some people, asking for help. On 30 July 1954 he wrote to Ambrose Ondrak, Abbot of St Procopius Benedictine Abbey at Lisle near Chicago: "Unfortunately up to the present moment the premises of my Mission have been rented. This year with the permission and benediction of my Superiors in Rome, His Eminence Cardinal Griffin and Bishop Sloskans, Apostolic Visitor for Byelorussians I have started a Subscription Fund for the purpose of purchasing a house for the Byelorussian Catholic Mission in London. With it I take the liberty in addressing my appeal to you...".

On 25 October 1954 Father Sipovich wrote the following letter to the Belarusian priest in Germany, Father Uladzislau Salaviej: "I give many thanks to you for the assistance hitherto given to the Belarusian Catholic Mission. The development and success of the Mission is doubtless near to your heart, and that is why I take the liberty to ask you, Reverend Father, another favour, namely to help acquire a house for the Mission (ut adiutorio in emenda domo pro Missione venias). To buy this house which would meet the needs of the Mission, £8000 are required. The action of collecting money under the patronage of His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of Westminster, has already started".

He also sought the help of Father Werenfried van Straaten, founder of the "Oostpriesterhulp" (Help to priests from the East). In his letter of 31 August 1956 he wrote: "The next and the most important thing is the purchase of a house specifically for the Belarusian Catholic Mission in England (Die nächste and auch sehr wichtige Sache ist der Ankauf des eigenen Hauses für die Weissruthenische Katholische Mission in London)... We turn to you, dear Father, and through you to all your benefactors with the request to help us... The purchase of the house for the Belarusian Catholic Mission will not only assure the existence of the Mission, but also constitute a spiritual centre for all Belarusians in England and in the whole of Europe".

In response to Father Sipovich's appeal, Father van Straaten sent him £357, which at that time was a considerable sum. But he was an exception. In general the direct appeal to prominent Catholic figures, such as Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, Stritch of Chicago and Lercaro of Bologna was a failure. This was to be expected: ten years after the end of the war most refugees had had time to get settled and start looking after their own affairs. Perhaps the wording of the letter itself had also something to do with it. Father Sipovich began his (identical) letters of 31 July 1954 to Spellman and Stritch (also in Spanish to Cardinal Copello of Buenos Aires) with the following sentence: "In consequence of religious persecution in our fatherland Whiteruthenia (Byelorussia) a great number of exiles of my compatriots... settled in Gt Britain". Now although there was genuine religious persecution in the Communist-dominated Eastern Europe, the reasons why most refugees were unable or unwilling to return to their native countries were political and economic, and religion played little or no part in their decision. Father Sipovich's statement sounded at best unconvincing, and at worst it looked like an attempt to exploit the religious feelings of persons to whom the letters were addressed.

In his letter to Cardinal Lercaro of 29 June 1955 Father Sipovich, after having asked for help "to acquire a house for my Mission (per acquistare la casa per mia Missione)", continues: "...my initiative has been favourably received and approved by my immediate superiors, namely His Eminence Cardinal Griffin and His Excellency Boleslaus Sloskans". In fact his immediate superiors were the Superior General of the

Marian Fathers and the Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, whose names were conspicuous by their absence among the members of the Honorary Committee for the purchase of Marian House...

Significantly in all the above appeals for funds there is no mention of the Marian Fathers. Thus the potential benefactors were led to believe that the house would be the property of the Belarusian Catholic Mission. Even those near to Father Sipovich were not aware of all the facts. On 24 December 1954 a letter appeared in the *Catholic Herald* entitled "A London Mission" and signed by the chairman of the Belarusian Catholic Unversity Union "Run'", J. Pazniak. The author, after praising the work done by the "White Ruthenian Catholic Mission, temporarily established at Marian House, Holden Avenue, London N.12... under the enlightened and ever available guidance and sympathy of Fr Sipovich", goes on to say: "To continue this good work, an urgent appeal for help is made to the kind hearts of all people of good will... Especially, funds are necessary to acquire Marian House as a permanent headquarters for this Mission. For this purpose the Marian House Fund was inaugurated during the year under the gracious patronage of His Eminence Cardinal Griffin and His Excellency Bishop Sloskans, Apostolic Visitor for White Ruthenians, who has already generously contributed". Most of the members of the Honorary Committee are no longer alive, so it is difficult to know whether they were aware of the true state of affairs, but the letter of 2 December 1998 by one of them, Dr Vitaut Romuk from Chicago, to A. Nadson seems to suggest that they were not. Dr Romuk writes: "In 1953-54 I was living in London... In 1954 Father Sipovich asked me whether I would agree to put my name on the Committee for the purchase of Marian House as a permanent seat for the Belarusian Catholic Mission in England. I agreed readily, because the idea of having our own permanent religious centre appealed very much to me and to many other Belarusians... It was therefore with considerable shock that I recently learned that Marian House has remained the property of the Marian Fathers, and not of the Belarusian Catholic Mission in England. It seems to me that at the beginning I and the others were not given the true facts. I am sure that if we had known the truth, our response to the appeal would have been different... As a Catholic and a Belarusian I am very disturbed by what I have learnt. It has been my firm belief that the wishes of benefactors should be respected at all costs. It is not my aim to accuse anyone, but it seems that Belarusians were deceived. As for myself personally, I cannot help feeling that I have been used".

Some of Father Sipovich's Belarusian private correspondents received still more scanty information. In his letter of 12 September 1953 to A. Kastsiukievich in Buffalo (USA) he wrote: "Now allow me to ask you a favour. After long deliberations I have decided to buy Marian House from the Lithuanians... Having considered the matter with all compatriots known to me, I have decided to start a collection for the purchase in order to establish in it (i.e. the house) a Belarusiam library, archives, and a place for meetings".

Unlike the benefactors, the church authorities were informed of the true state of affairs. Father Sipovich wrote on 30 December 1954 to the Secretary of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, Cardinal Eugene Tisserant: "It was decided to establish in London a 'New Druia', but in order to do this it is first necessary to buy an appropriate house. This problem was solved easily, because the Lithuanian Fathers came to our help and expressed their willingness to sell on favourable terms their property 'Marian House', in which I have been living since 1949... In view of this, with the approval of the Superior General and the General Council of Marian Regular Clerics, and with the blessing of His Eminence Cardinal Griffin, Archbishop of

Westminster, I was granted permission to collect money for the purchase of ‘Marian House’ for the Belarusian Marians... To make things clear I enclose the necessary documents and humbly ask Your Eminence’s assistance in buying the house, leaving it to your consideration and generosity".

Tisserant answered on 25 February 1955: "With regard to the purchase of the House for the Mission, since the contract is going to be an internal affair within the same Religious Congregation (between Lithuanian Marian Fathers of Latin rite and Belarusian Marian Fathers of Byzantine rite), this Sacred Congregation (for the Eastern Churches – *A.N.*) has no particular interest in it; if, on the other hand, the purchase were made for the Belarusian Catholic Mission of Byzantine rite in England ‘sic et simpliciter’ (thus and simply), then and only then would this Sacred Congregation examine its possibilities with the view of making a contribution".

The Belarusian community abroad after the Second World War consisted mainly of "new" emigrés, i.e. those who remained in the West as refugees, unable to return to Belarus which was then part of the Soviet Union. Most of them were young, and in the early 1950s they were just beginning to build new lives in the countries of their final settlement. They worked hard and, if not exactly suffering extreme hardship, certainly needed every penny they earned. At the same time they showed great understanding of matters concerning Belarusian interests and the preservation of their national identity. Many of them appreciated the value of a permanent Belarusian religious centre, and that was the reason for their generous response to the appeal for the purchase of Marian House, not only from the Catholics, but also from the Orthodox. However, if the appeal had been made on behalf of the Marian Fathers, the Belarusians response would have been no different from that of Cardinal Tisserant. For the younger generation of Belarusians who grew up during the war, the Marian Fathers meant nothing. Older people, on the other hand, might have remembered the fate of Druia and that would have made them cautious.

The life of Father Sipovich was closely bound up with the Congregation of Marian Fathers since the moment when as a young peasant boy he joined the juniorate at Druia. He remained faithful and emotionally attached to them to the end. The years spent at Druia left a deep impression on him. With the passage of time the importance of that establishment in the religious life of Belarus grew in his imagination out of all proportions. Marian House, in Sipovich’s plans, was to become a continuation of Druia, at least in spirit, or a "New Druia", as he wrote to Cardinal Tisserant. On the whole, however, he kept the idea of "New Druia" to himself and shared it only with a few persons who in his opinion would appreciate it. Thus on 27 August 1954 he wrote to Father Michael Urbanovich, a Belarusian Marian Father who spent practically all his life working among Poles and Lithuanians in the United States: "Marian House is going to be a New Druia which, ruined and profaned by the atheists, will always glory in the fact that our holy Fathers Abrantovich, Tsikota and Hermanovich, who gave their lives and shed blood for the faith, worked there. I, the only survivor, would like to continue with the help of God the traditions of Druia, of my dear Fathers who educated me. That is why it is necessary to establish a house of Belarusian Marian Fathers in exile".

A little more succintly Sipovich wrote on 1 October 1954 to Dr Stanislaus Hrynkievich in Cleveland: "Marian House is a New Druia. Here a place must be found for Belarusian archives, museum etc. It is very difficult to make this plan come true, but with the help of God everything is possible".

Since the potential benefactors knew nothing about the plans to make Marian House a new Druia, it is difficult to avoid accusations of deception, or at least of what the moral theologians call "mental reservation", i. e. witholding part of the truth. In this case the fact made public was the intention to make Marian House the permanent seat of the Belarusian Catholic Mission. What remained unsaid was that the house would be owned not by the Mission but by Belarusian Marian Fathers. Thus the "permanency" would be conditional on the Marian Fathers remaining in charge of the Mission. The line which divides mental reservation from a lie is very fine, and for this reason it must be used with great caution, usually in cases when someone has no right to be told the truth. And benefactors naturally have the full right to know the truth about the intended use of their money, and demand that their wishes should be respected.

In 1954 the Belarusian Marian community at Marian House consisted of two persons: Father Sipovich and Brother Nicholas, aged 40 and 51 years respectively. Realistic prospects for growth were practically nil. The only candidate, John Sadouski, who came in 1948 and went to Rome to study, left the Marian Congregation in autumn 1953. There was no hope of getting Belarusian Marians from Poland, and in any case they all belonged to the Roman rite and were no longer young. This did not discourage Father Sipovich. He began collecting money in 1953 without waiting for official approval. Thus in June of that year he made visits to Belarusian communities in Coventry, Birmingham, Nottingham, Newark and Newport (in Wales) and came home with the enormous sum of... £6. In September 1954 Father Sipovich paid a visit to Ireland. His trip was organised by a group of members of the Legion of Mary, most of them Irish, who since 1950 had been coming regularily to Marian House. It was not a pastoral visit because there were no Belarusians in Ireland. As an attempt to raise money for Marian House it was a disappointment. The second visit in May 1957 was no better, although Father Sipovich saw the founder of the Legion of Mary, Frank Duff who gave £2 for Marian House, and was received by President de Valera who said that all requests for help should be addressed to the Irish bishops. He failed to obtain an audience with the Archbishop of Dublin, while the Vicar General received him "politely but coldly".

The link with the Legion of Mary started in 1950 on the instruction of Buchys. An "Eastern praesidium" of the Legion was established, with its seat at Marian House. Its members were pleasant and pious young people, with more enthusiasm than knowledge, full of good will and ready to help. Some of them later developed a serious interest in Eastern Christianity and helped to revive the Society of Saint John Chrysostom.

The fund-raising campaign started seriously late in 1954. Belarusians and their friends responded most generously to Father Sipovich's appeal. Early in 1956 he was already able to pay the first £1000 to the Lithuanian Marian Fathers. This was followed by another £1000 a year later. In September of 1957 he embarked on a three-months tour of the United States and Canada. Although fund-raising for Marian House was not the only reason for his going there, it figured prominently in his plans. He visited Belarusian communities in New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit in the United States, and Toronto and London (Ontario) in Canada. He came back on 13 December with nearly $6500 ($3000 of which was a grant from the National Catholic Welfare Conference), or over £2000 according to the rate of exchange at that time. With more donations coming, by February 1959 the total sum paid to the Lithuanians was £5200. On 8 July of that year the Lithuanian Fathers made the following decision: "Since the greater part of the money for 'Marian House' has been paid to

Lithuanian Fathers by Fr Ceslaus Sipovich, MIC (hitherto £5200 has been paid, there remains still £3000 to pay), it was unanimously decided to transfer the title of ownership of 'Marian House' to the Belarusian Marian Fathers". The Marian General Council in Rome on 21 July approved "the transfer of the title of ownership of the house called 'Marian House' from the Lithuanian Province to the Marian Fathers of Belarusian origin".

Thus the campaign to acquire Marian House as the permanent seat for the Belarusian Catholic Mission came to its conclusion. But the Mission was no nearer to owning the house: it remained the property of its former owners, the Congregation of Marian Fathers who thus achieved the impossible feat of having their cake and eating it. The so-called "transfer of the title of ownership" from Lithuanian to Belarusian Marian Fathers was a purely internal affair within that Congregation. This fact was unknown to many good Belarusians and their friends (some of them non-Catholics) from all over the world, who remained convinced that with their contributions they helped to secure a permanent place for the Belarusian Mission. A few people, however, seemed to have their doubts. On 1 June 1955 Sipovich wrote to Mr and Mrs Victor Ivanouski in London (Ontario): "Under separate cover I am sending a subscription list for Marian House. When you see it, you will understand how much effort it has cost me to secure the exalted patronage of the Cardinal of Westminster and other persons... I shall be grateful if you could find at least a few benefactors who would wish to put their names on the list...". Unimpressed by the "exalted patronage" Ivanouski answered (letter without date): "Until now I have collected $21... If the money is not urgently needed, then I would like to wait and send (later) a larger amount, say 50 dollars, because I hope to collect a considerable sum when you publish in the newspaper *Batskaushchyna* (Native country) an explanation who will be the owner of the house etc. You see, people are asking me, and Dr B. Rahula demands categorically a fuller explanation".

It is not known whether there were other similar demands. Be it as it may, the Munich-based Belarusian paper *Batskaushchyna* (Native country) published the following letter of Father Sipovich in its issue of 3 June 1956: "At the request of some Belarusians I would like to declare publicly the following: the house in London (Holden Avenue N.12), known as 'Marian House", in which since 1948 there has been a Belarusian Catholic chapel, is designed to serve the following purposes:

1. To provide accommodation to Belarusian Marian monks;
2. To carry out religious work among Belarusian Catholics in Great Britain;
3. To house a library, archives and museum, exclusively Belarusian or related to Belarusian studies.

From the legal point of view the matter stands thus: the General Council of Marian Fathers gave formal permission for the purchase of Marian House for the above mentioned purposes, obviously, on condition that the means to cover the cost of the purchase could be found. There is no doubt whatsoever, that Marian House is intended for Belarusians, and will remain theirs forever. Today there are 12 Belarusian Marian priests in Europe, but until now they have had no opportunity to meet and work together. But even if there were such a possibility, they have nowhere to meet until Marian House is acquired. Older Belarusians who remember the monastery of Marian Fathers in Druia and their work among Belarusian young people and peasants, will know that Marian House will serve the same ends, although in different, more difficult circumstances of exile..."[33]. The rest of the letter consists of an appeal for donations.

---

33 "Kupla 'Marian Hause' u Londane", *Batskaushchyna*, No.23, Munich, 3.6.1956, p.4

One reads these lines with mixed feelings, because what they imply is the complete opposite of what was said in the Belarusian Catholic Mission Fund appeal. They give the impression of being written by a worried man, trying to limit the damage caused by the leakage of unwelcome news. The Belarusian Catholic Mission is not mentioned at all, and that is perhaps the most striking feature of the whole letter. The first of the three chief purposes of Marian House mentioned was to provide accommodation (the author stops short from saying who would own the house) for Belarusian Marian Fathers, whose record of work at Druia should serve as sufficient proof of their future intentions. The talk about twelve Belarusian Marian Fathers in Europe with no place to meet was nothing but a smoke screen. First of all they were not twelve but ten, of whom only one, Ceslaus Sipovich, was in the West. The remaining nine were in Communist-dominated Poland, and there was little hope of them being allowed to come to London. Moreover, at least three of them (Dashuta, Khamionak and Smulka) were elderly and infirm. Others (Apiachonak, Sarul, Los'), apart from being polonised, at least in the cultural sense, had never expressed any wish to come and work among Belarusians in the West. In fact one of them, Anthony Los', wrote (in Polish) to Bishop Sipovich as late as 5 June 1969, expressing his wish to dedicate the rest of his priestly life to work "among brothers in the East". Then he continued: "It might be useful to come abroad to broaden one's outlook, but never to work". The letter was also signed by Francis Apiachonak.

The key idea of Sipovich's letter to *Batskaushchyna* was to assure the readers that there should be no doubt whatsoever about the fact that Marian House was intended for Belarusians. This begs the question, why should there have been any doubt in the first place? On the whole the letter explains nothing and leaves the reader more confused than before.

Something must be said about £3000 owed by Belarusian Marian Fathers to their Lithuanian confrères after 1959. The flow of donations by that time had almost dried up, and the debt was paid out of the annual grant of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches for the Belarusian Catholic Mission. The following table compiled from the account books of the Marian Fathers (no separate accounts for the Mission were kept), leaves little room for doubt:

| Grant of the Oriental Congregation | Payment for Marian House |
|---|---|
| Jan 1960 £500 | 25 Jan 1960 £500 |
| 10 March 1961 £500 | 10 March 1961 £500 |
| 3 Apr. 1962 £500 | 3 Apr. 1962 £500 |
| 1 Jan. 1963 £500 | 1 Jan. 1963 £500 |
| 10 Feb. 1964 £500 | 11 Feb. 1964 £500 |
| 23 Jan. 1965 £750 | 26 Jan. 1965 £250 |
| 9 Feb. 1966 £500 | 9 Feb. 1966 £250 |
| **TOTAL £3750** | **TOTAL £3000** |

Thus the Oriental Congregation, against its will and without its knowledge, became a benefactor of Marian Fathers.

Ceslaus Sipovich was a man of vision and courage which had its source in his profound and sincere faith. He was also loyal to the Congregation of Marian Fathers to which he owed so much. Sadly this loyalty often took the form of an emotional attachment which clouded his usually sound judgments and prevented him from seeing things as they really were. His dream was to have a community of Belarusian

Marian Fathers who would continue the Druia tradition and be "forever" in charge of the Belarusian Catholic Mission in England. In his mind there was no clear distinction between those two institutions, and this in time was bound to create considerable difficulties and misunderstanding. Right to the end he refused to entertain the idea that the time might come when there would be no Belarusian Marian priest left at Marian House. But that exactly is what happened, and the question of the ownership arose with new urgency.

## 10. The Lord's Vineyard

The Belarusian community in the West after the Second World War consisted mainly of refugees, i.e.people who were forced to leave their country because of the oppressive Communist regime there. Initially they hoped that soon they would be able to return home. With the passage of time this hope receded, but they were still determined to retain their national identity and maintain links with their native country. There was nothing new in this. History knows several examples of people in exile retaining their identity, the most famous being the Jews who survived the Babylonian captivity and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. In more recent times one may recall the Polish "Great Emigration" after the uprising against Russian domination in 1830, which counted among its members Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki and Frederick Chopin. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 there was a Russian emigration in the West which included Berdayev, Bulgakov, Loski, Evdokimov and others who became well known in the West for their contribution to the development of philosophical and theological thought.

Belarus was among the countries least known in the West. This created additional difficulties for the Belarusian refugees who had to explain to their hosts who they were. Among them there were the well known writers and poets (Arsiennieva, Siadniou, Salaviej), composers (Kulikovich, Ravenski, Karpovich), scholars (Tumash, Adamovich, Haroshka, Stankievich) artists (Miranovich, Zhauniarovich, Naumovich, Rusak) etc. Their contribution to the development of Belarusian culture has only recently been acknowledged and appreciated in Belarus.

The religious situation was very difficult in Belarus. Under the Soviet Communist regime, which was hostile to any form of religion, all religious activity was severely restricted. But even within this restricted sphere there was not much which could bring comfort to a Belarusian. The Orthodox Church, the largest of all religious bodies, formed part of the Russian Moscow Patriarchate, and the use of any language other than Russian in sermons, teaching of cathechism etc. (the liturgical language was Church Slavonic) was unthinkable. As to the Roman Catholics, no sooner had the Second Vatican Council allowed the use of vernacular in church services, than they introduced... Polish. The use of Belarusian was not exactly forbidden, but those few who dared to do so incurred the opprobrium of their confrères and accusations of harming the Catholic Church. The situation of the Belarusian Catholic Church of Byzantine Rite, usually known as Greek Catholic, or Uniate Church, was most tragic of all. Once the church of the vast majority of Belarusian people, in 1839 it was suppressed by the Russian authorities and forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. Attempts at reviving it early in the 20th century, and especially after 1918, found support among many priests such as Adam Stankievich and Constantine Stepovich (the poet Kazimier Svaiak), and also lay persons, the most prominent of them being Princess Magdalena Radzivill. They were opposed by the Polish political and ecclesiastical authorities who were afraid that a strong Belarusian Greek Catholic Church would present a serious obstacle to their policy of polonisation. For this reason they favoured the policy of "converting" Orthodox Belarusians to the Roman rite, or failing this, trying to make "Orthodox Poles" out of them. The Commission "Pro Russia" also did not like the idea of Belarusian Greek Catholic Church, but for different reasons: for them Belarusians were simply Russians, and they feared the effect which Belarusian "separatism" could have on the "conversion" of Russia. As for the Orthodox Belarusians, more than a century of the official Russian propaganda made its effects felt among them, and they viewed the Greek Catholic Church with apprehension and suspicion. All this, and

especially the official Vatican policy as represented by the Commission "Pro Russia", made some former supporters of the Greek Catholic Church disheartened. The others, on the other hand, were more than ever determined to assert their right as faithful members of the Holy Church to remain what they were, and worship God in the manner most suited to their spiritual needs. In this way the attitude towards the Greek Catholics had become (and still is today) a sure indicator of the degree of freedom and tolerance within the Church. After the fall of Poland in September 1939, Metropolitan Andrew Sheptytsky, Archbishop of L'viv, established a Greek Catholic Exarchate (Diocese) in Belarus. The Exarch, Father Antony Niemantsevich, died in a German prison in 1942. The Soviet Communists, after they reoccupied Belarus and Ukraine in 1944, singled out the Greek Catholic Church as their particular target for a campaign of hate and persecution. In 1945 the 4-million strong Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine was destroyed and forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus the Belarusian scenario of 1839 was repeated in Ukraine with this difference that this time the champion of the Russian Orthodox Church was not the Orthodox tsar but the godless Communist regime. The small, weak Belarusian Church had no chance of survival.

It was up to the Belarusian community outside Belarus to defend the right of their people to hear the Message of Salvation and to praise God in their native tongue, and to the few Greek Catholics among them to keep the idea of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church alive.

Haroshka and Sipovich were both priests of Byzantine (Greek Catholic) rite, but their backgrounds and characters could not have been more different. Father Haroshka was not only born into, but also received his priestly formation in the Byzantine rite at the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Academy in L'viv. As a priest he had worked in various Greek Catholic parishes in Belarus. Unlike many other priests he had never been, or had any wish to be a "biritualist", i.e. to have the right to officiate in both the Byzantine and Roman rites. A man of unshakable faith, Haroshka was very demanding to himself but understanding with others. He had an astonishing capacity for hard work, and the extent of his knowledge was really impressive. By temperament and inclination he was a scholar and worked best alone. He could be stubborn and uncompromising in his views.

Sipovich, on the other hand, was born into, and brought up in the Roman rite. There is no evidence that he showed any interest in the Byzantine rite before 1938, when at the age of 24 he took up Tsikota's offer to go to Rome. He had his "oriental" training in the somewhat artificial atmosphere of the Russian College where a genuine Russian was a rarity, and narrowly missed being sent to Manchuria to "convert" Russians.

Sipovich belonged to a religious congregation which was not known for its "oriental" spirit. In many respects he had remained "Latin" in his outlook and spirituality. In fact until he became a bishop, Sipovich often celebrated Mass in the Roman rite, especially during his travels. His loyalty to the Marian Congregation was the cause of some difficulties and clashes of interests. The religious life did not always come easy to him. During his annual retreat in October 1944 he made the following resolutions: 1) keep the timetable most conscientiously; 2) do nothing without the knowledge of the superiors or against their wishes; 3) try to love the virtue of obedience. In September 1945 it was the turn of examining his relations with the Superior General, i.e. Buchys: "Because of Father Superior General's advanced age, and because perhaps not everything he tries to do is an unqualified success, I must never criticise his views and his orders in front of the others. I must never take

an uncompromising stand, as I have been known to do". He returned to the question of obedience in October 1950 and made the following remark in his retreat notes: "I find obedience very difficult, especially in matters when my reason shows me their foolishness".

The problem of how to reconcile the universal character of Christ's Message with the love of one's people evidently troubled Sipovich. It became acute after the failed attempt of two different institutions at Marian House – Belarusian and Russian – to find a way to work together. One of his meditations during the the same retreat in 1950 was on the words of Saint Paul, known as the Apostle of the Gentiles: "I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood" (Rom 9:3-4). Under this quotation Sipovich made the note: "Israelites (= Belarusians)".

Intelligent rather than intellectual, Sipovich had many statesmanlike qualities. In other circumstances he could have been a succesful businesman or politician. And yet his faith was so sincere and evident that one could not imagine him as anything other than a priest.

With Father Sipovich established permanently at Marian House, its chapel of SS Peter and Paul had become a "parish church" for Belarusians in London. This was very important, because one of the main difficulties for Belarusians in organising their religious life was the absence of their own place of worship. The chapel was blessed on Sunday 16 May 1948. It was a modest place, consisting of one fairly large room, in which there was an altar and a few most necessary items of church furnishing, no iconostasis and very few icons. But the people who came there for Sunday Liturgy, felt it was their place. They were free to stay after the Service, to talk and have a cup of tea, to sit in the garden in the summer and have a rest, and watch the more energetic having a game of volleyball. Soon other religious activities began to take place – day retreats, religious talks, prayers for Unity Octave etc. There was a small but well organised choir. Although it was a Catholic Byzantine rite chapel, it was frequented by Roman rite Catholics and the Orthodox.

Father Sipovich was determined to have the chapel in a traditional Byzantine style. The Oriental Congregation approved his project and promised to pay for it. The iconostasis was constructed specially for the chapel in summer 1951. Father Jerome Leussing, a monk from the well known Benedictine monastery at Chevetogne in Belgium, was commissioned to paint the icons. He painted the principal icons (Christ, Mother of God, Last Supper, four evangelists and Annunciation) but unfortunately died in 1952 without completing his work. It was continued by his pupil, Sister Ludgardis, the Benedictine nun from the Schotenhof abbey near Antwerp, who also painted a set of small icons for major feasts. The chapel itself was enlarged in 1952 by knocking down the wall separating it from the adjoining room. By early 1953 the chapel assumed the look which has remained basically unchanged to the present day.

Marian House became the centre of various activities. In particular there was the Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run'", which was founded in 1949, with its headquarters in London at Marian House. Its membership consisted of Catholic university students and graduates, but their events were open to all. In particular their meetings in London every last Sunday of the month were very popular and well attended. The meeting lasted all day, starting with the Liturgy, a common meal and one or two lectures. From 1951 onwards "Run'" organised study weeks during the summer vacation with participants from various countries. Each study week had a special theme, e.g. "To be at one with Christ and the Church (Sentire cum Christo et

Ecclesia}", "Christ – the Way, the Truth and the Life", "Christian elements in Belarusian Culture" etc. Usually one day was reserved for a retreat, which on a few occasions was conducted by Bishop Sloskans, Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. One of the most memorable study weeks was the third one, which took place in London at Marian House on 27 July – 2 August 1953. It concluded on Sunday 2 August with the ceremony of blessing the icon of the heavenly patrons of Belarus. The Icon, of the type called "Deisis" (Supplication), represented Christ enthroned as Pantocrator, flanked by his Blessed Mother and Saint John the Baptist in the upper row, and a group of five Belarusian saints in the lower. It was commissioned for the chapel of SS Peter and Paul at Marian House by Andrew Bahamolec, a descendant of the ancient princes of Minsk, and painted by the Ukrainian artist Iryna Korostovets. The blessing was performed by Archbishop William Godfrey, Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, who was assisted by Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans. The icon now hangs behind the altar in the sanctuary of the chapel of SS Peter and Paul at Marian House. The next study week was held during the Marian Year on 24 October - 1 November 1954 in Rome and was combined with participation in the International Mariological Congress. The programme was somewhat curtailed to give the participants the chance to take part in general events: the Congress itself, at which Father Tatarynovich read a paper; the multinational procession (where Belarusians formed their own group) with the famous icon of the Mother of God "Salus Populi Romani" from the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore to Saint Peter in the Vatican, and subsequent coronation of the icon by the Holy Father; the international concert in honour of the Mother of God, which included a solo performance by the Belarusian bass singer Peter Koniukh etc.

Incidentally after the first study week in July 1951 at the Benedictine monastary of Chevetogne in Belgium, some members went on to Reims to take part in the Congress of "Pax Romana". It was at this Congress that "Run’" was admitted as an ordinary member of this world-wide Catholic University organisation.

The study weeks of "Run’" proved very popular and attracted participants from England, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. They were open to non-members, both Catholics and Orthodox. For Belarusian priests working in various countries of Western Europe they presented an unique opportunity to meet and discuss their problems.

Father Sipovich took an active part in the cultural and social activities of the Association of Belarusians and the newly founded Anglo-Belarusian Society. The aim of the latter was to make Belarus, its culture, history and present-day problems, known among the English speaking people. One of the first important joint ventures was the celebration of the Belarusian National Day (25 March) in 1954, with the participation of the Belarusian student choir from Leuven (Louvain) in Belgium, the composer Ales Karpovich from Oldenburg in Germany and the singer Peter Koniukh from Rome. The celebration began on 25 March with a concert in Christ Church Hall in Finchley, the London borough in which Marian House was situated. Among those present was the Mayor of Finchley, as well as practically all members of the council. On Saturday 27 March there was a second concert in Westminster Cathedral Hall in the presence of the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Griffin, and many church and civil dignitaries. The following day was Sunday, and the Liturgy at the chapel of SS Peter and Paul was concelebrated by Father Sipovich and the chaplain of Belarusian students at Leuven (Louvain) University, Father Robert van Cauvelaert.

At the above celebration there the Belarusian Orthodox priest, Father Alexander Kryt was also present. As there was no Belarusian Orthodox church in

London, he celebrated the Liturgy in the hall of the house of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain.

Alexander Kryt (1901-1983) came to England in 1948 from Germany as a European Volunteer Worker. He was active in Belarusian life in Germany, where he was known as a a hard and conscientious worker, a pious Orthodox and a man to be trusted. In 1948 the Belarusian Autocephalic Orthodox Church was restored. On 25 June 1950 Bishop Vasil (Tamashchyk), on a visit to England, ordained Kryt a priest. He seems to have agreed to become a priest under some sort of moral pressure. On 29 June 1950, four days after his ordination, he wrote to Father Sipovich: "The final choice of this way (of life) happened somehow against my will, because there was simply not enough strength left to refuse". Nevertheless, once ordained, he became a good and conscientious priest. In 1961 he went to the United States, was consecrated bishop in 1968 (assuming the name of Andrew) and three years later, in 1971, became the head of the Belarusian Orthodox Church in Exile. His last years were marred by quarrels and splits in that Church. Father Sipovich was on friendly terms with Father Kryt when he was in England, both before and after his ordination. In particular he helped him obtain essential liturgical books.

In 1953 Lavon Rydleuski, chairman of the Belarusian Union in France "Khaurus", fell ill. Initially it was thought that he had been working too hard and that he needed simply a good rest. All his life Rydleuski had selflessly helped others without a thought for himself, and as a result was penniless. Father Sipovich was asked to take him to Marian House. On his arrival it was discovered that Rydleuski was terminally ill with cancer. He died in London on 24 October 1953. Father Sipovich heard his confession before his death and gave him Holy Communion. However, since Rydleuski was Orthodox, he asked Father Kryt who lived in Bradford some 200 miles away from London, to come and conduct the funeral service, offering to cover his travelling expenses. This happened long before the Catholic Church discovered ecumenism.

Two other events took place towards the end of 1953. Alexander Nadson who for many years had worked closely with Father Sipovich in London, began studying for the priesthood at the Greek College in Rome. John Sadouski, who was admitted by Sipovich in 1948 as his first candidate for the Marian Fathers and sent to Rome to study, decided not to renew his vows and left the Marian Congregation. He also changed his rite from Byzantine to Roman. With the help of Bishop Sloskans a place was found for him at the French College where he continued his theological studies. He was ordained priest on 17 December 1955.

After the death of Stalin in 1953 there was a certain relaxation of the regime in the Soviet Union. The first to feel its effects were the inmates of the innumerable prisons and forced labour camps. Some of them, especially those holding foreign passports, were released. Among them were the surviving Belarusian Marian Fathers from Harbin. Father Hermanovich was released in April 1955 and deported against his will (according to his words, he wanted to be allowed to go to Belarus) to Poland. He was soon joined there by Father Thomas Padziava. Father Andrew Tsikota did not live to see freedom: he died in a prison hospital near lake Baikal on 11 February 1952. The details of his death were brought West by Father Paul Chaleil, a French priest who had worked alongside the Belarusian Fathers in Harbin and was arrested together with them. He was released in September 1955. Father Sipovich met him in Rome on 12 October 1955 and wrote down all Father Chaleil told him about the fate of Father Tsikota.

Father Sipovich came back to London early in November 1955 with his new assistant, Father Constantine Maskalik. He was a pious man, who before the war had liked to visit various Orthodox and Catholic sanctuaries in Western Belarus and Ukraine, and who had spent some time in the Zhyrovitsy (Orthodox) and Univ (Greek Catholic) monasteries. Early in 1941 he was drafted into the Soviet army, but after the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, as a Polish citizen, was discharged and permitted to join the Polish army which was then being formed in the Soviet Union. With the Polish Army he eventually reached Italy via Iran and Middle East. After the end of the war and demobilisation in 1946 he remained in Italy and was admitted to the Russian College (Russicum) in Rome as a candidate for the priesthood. It took him nine years instead of the usual six to achieve his goal, because before beginning his theological studies he had to obtain the secondary education he lacked. He was ordained priest on Easter Sunday 10 April 1955.

Father Maskalik proved to be something of a disappointment. On 16 November 1955 Father Sipovich wrote to Father Haroshka: "Father Constantine M. is getting used to us and we to him. A country boy in everything!". There is more about him in the letter of 28 December: "Fr Constantine M. is all right. But when shall I have some real help from him? God only knows. I don't see in him any initiative, and when you give him something to do, there is no knowing whether he will do it. He has a healthy appetite... Is very nervous. It seems that Russicum for him was not a seminary, but a prison, where they also teach you something... We shall see".

Nearly two years later, on 15 April 1957, Sipovich wrote to Tatarynovich: "...as I have been alone, so I am now. My assistant... is growing a beard! A narrow-minded, stubborn man... Nearly two years have passed, and he cannot speak a word of English. He is inept in dealing with people. I write this to you and cry silently, because I have not seen anything similar among all priests whom I have chanced to meet in my life".

Father Maskalik, a man of unquestionable and sincere piety, might have been a good assistant priest in a normal parish with an established routine of work. However, in a situation, in which much depended on the initiative of the individual, he lacked the necessary drive and vision. Another serious drawback was his lack of the a good general cultural background which one usually acquires in secondary school and which no amount of "cramming" could make up. These and other factors made relations between him and Father Sipovich somewhat uneasy.

Father Maskalik might not have been of much help, but at least his presence assured the continuity of services at SS Peter and Paul chapel at Marian House during Father Sipovich's frequent absences, in particular during the trip to the United States and Canada which lasted three months from 10 September to 13 December 1957. This was Father Sipovich's first visit to the American continent, and there is little doubt that one of its aims was to collect money towards the purchase of Marian House. But there were also other reasons. The post-war Belarusian community in America had by now solved the basic problem of survival and had begun organising their national life. Soon there began to spring up national organisations such as the Belarusian-American Association with branches in all major cities. In 1950 the Association began to publish a paper *Belarus* (The Belarusian). On 16 December 1951 the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences was founded, with its seat in New York. In 1952 the first issue of the Institute's official publication, *Zapisy* (Proceedings), appeared. This was followed in 1954 by the literary journal *Konadni* (Vigils). The most numerous Belarusian community was in and around New York, with a large number of writers and poets (Natalla Arsiennieva, Masiej Siadniou, Iurka

Vitsbich, Mikhas Kavyl), literary critics and journalists (Stanislau Stankievich, Anton Adamovich), artists (Piotra Miranovich), scholars (Vitaut Tumash, Ianka Stankievich) etc. The other centres were Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, also Toronto in Canada. The Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church was well organised, with a bishop (Vasil Tamashchyk) in New York and a number of parishes in various towns (New York, New Brunswick, Cleveland, Detroit, Toronto). There were also parishes which depended directly on the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Catholics, on the other hand, had practically nothing, except the nucleus of a Greek Catholic parish in Chicago. In March 1957 Father Francis Charniauski came to the United States and made an attempt to organise a religious life among the Roman (Latin) rite Catholics who were particularily numerous in and around New York. He was hampered by the fact of being alone and having to work as assistant priest in a Polish American parish at a considerable distance from where the majority of Belarusians lived.

Father Sipovich spent much time in New York. He stayed there with Mr and Mrs Francis Kushal. Mrs Kushal is better known as Natalla Arsiennieva, one of the most outstanding Belarusian poets of the 20th century. The Belarusian community held a reception in his honour on 28 September. On 26 October there was a meeting of members of the Catholic University Union "Run’" (many of them had emigrated recently from England) and friends, at which Father Sipovich spoke on the new trends in the Catholic Church and the importance of religion in private life. The highlight of his stay in New York was Mass for Belarusians at St Patrick’s Cathedral on Sunday 27 October, the feast of Christ the King in the Roman calendar. There were also private meetings with Archbishop Basil and fathers Voitanka and Daniluk from the Belarusian Orthodox Autocephalic Church; Dr Vitaut Tumash, president of the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences, and others. On 25 October Father Sipovich paid a visit to the "Russian Centre" at the Jesuit Fordham University, and had an interesting conversation with its director, Father Mailllеux. Here is what he wrote in his diary: "Father Mailleux draws his own conclusions: 73 Jesuits have dedicated themselves to work in the Byzantine rite. There are 18 parishes. And the results? Apostasies of priests, there are no Russian Catholic families. What to do?... I draw the attention of Father M. to the fact that Jesuit Fathers direct all their efforts to work exclusively among Russians. They have forgotten about Ukrainians and Belarusians. Father M. said: ‘If England becomes Catholic, there will be no difficulty in converting Northern Ireland’. What he wanted to say was that when Russia becomes Catholic, there will be no trouble with Ukraine and Belarus. I replied to this strongly and indignantly: ‘This is the talk of a missionary theoretician, for whom Belarus and Ukraine are of no consequence. The Belarusian people is foremost in the mind of a Belarusian priest’".

In Chicago there had been a Belarusian organisation as early as 1920s. One of its founders was Joseph Varonka, the first Prime Minister of the Belarusian National Republic during the short period of its independence in 1918. There was a great number of emigrés from Belarus, most of them Orthodox. In the absence of their own priests, they usually joined the Russian Orthodox parishes, where they lost all traces of their separate identity. In an attempt to regain those "lost souls" Varonka began to publish, in Russian, a paper called *Belorusskaia tribuna* (Belarusian Tribune). He also saw the need for a similar publication in the Polish language to reach Belarusian Catholics who were swelling the ranks of Polish Catholic parishes. He wrote about this on 17 July 1929 to a Belarusian Catholic priest, Father John Tarasevitch, a member of the La Salette Missionary Congregation, who had come to the United

States as a young man in 1911. Incidentally the two men considered the possibility of establishing a Uniate Catholic parish in Chicago, for which purpose Father Tarasevitch was prepared to change from the Roman to the Byzantine rite. Varonka wrote to him on 25 August 1931: "About your changing to the Eastern rite it is impossible to give a satisfactory answer in a letter. The matter is too important. In general I have been interested in the Orthodox-Catholic problem in Belarus (and for Belarus) for a long time... If we could meet soon, we could discuss all aspects of this problem". It was not till five years later that Father Tarasevitch changed to the Byzantine rite. In 1936 he left the La Salette Congregation and entered the Benedictine novitiate. One year later he became a monk at Saint Procopius Benedictine abbey at Lisle near Chicago. The abbey was founded in 1885 by Czech benedictines and was named in honour of Procopius, an 11th-century Czech (Bohemian) saint. In 1930s, under abbot Procopius Neuzil the abbey became the centre for the Slavonic Apostolate in the United States, the word "Slavonic" being for all practical purposes synonymous with "Russian". The official organ of the Apostolate was a monthly journal called *Tserkovnyi golos – Voice of the Church*. It was a bilingual publication, its title and all articles being printed both in Russian and in English. Father Tarasevitch, who assumed the monastic name of John Chrysostom, became its editor. Hardly an issue of the journal appeared without a leading article by him. Of particular interest is his article in Sept.-Oct. 1939 issue, entitled "A Catholic's Duty towards the Orthodox".The title was somewhat misleading, because the author had in mind not the Orthodox in general, but the Orthodox Russians. According to him, the great obstacle preventing them from coming into the fold of the Catholic Church were Western priests in Eastern clerical garb but with a Western mentality and speaking Russian with an atrocious accent. Father Tarasevitch proposes a sure remedy: "... This great impediment to the reunion in question can be removed – namely, by sending among them priests and missionaries who are Russian themselves... 'And where are the Catholics among the Russians?' one may ask. There are very many excellent Catholics among the White-Russians. It is therefore from their midst that we should choose ardent missionaries for Russia... There are countless youths of their ranks in Russia who desire to become priests, missionaries, monks and nuns, but are unable to realise their high callings because they are poor... Catholics should bethink themselves of these excellent youthful Christians and enable them to realise their holy aspirations of becoming apostles for the unfortunate Russian people and workers for the rebirth and reestablishment of Christ's Church throughout Russia. Already a group of White-Russian Catholic priests and monks are successfully working among the Russians in Harbin, Manchuria. White-Russian priests and monks and nuns could work with equal success among the Russians everywhere if only the Catholics would come to the aid of the White-Russian lads and girls to enable them to become religious"[34]. The picture, painted by this latter-day follower of d'Herbigny and Buchys, of masses of Belarusian ("White Russian") young people who could not wait to go to "convert" Russia, is truly staggering...

Father Tarasevitch was joined in Lisle by another Belarusian priest, Joseph (Athanasius) Reshats, who came to the United States in 1938. The third member of their group was Father John's nephew, Uladyslau (Uladzimir) Tarasevitch, the future pastor of the Belarusian parish in Chicago and bishop, but at that time still a young student. In autumn 1941 Father John Tarasevitch became chairman of the newly founded organisation, the "White Russian American National Council". It was the

---

[34] Father Chrysostom, "A Catholic's Duty towards the Orthodox", *Voice of the Church*, Vol.IV, No.4-5, Lisle 1939, p.3

year when the armed conflict became truly world-wide, with the United States and the Soviet Union being forced into it, both on the same side. Thus the "Bad red Soviet bear" became overnight "Our gallant Russian ally". The general feeling of goodwill towards the Soviet Union in the West did not last long, and disappeared soon after the end of hostilities and the beginning of the "cold war". Only a few people persisted in displaying their pro-Soviet sympathies, and Father Tarasevitch was one of them. He did not hide his views and wrote about them freely in his correspondence with various Belarusians. As chairman of the "White Russian American National Council" he established contact with the head of the Belarusian Soviet delegation at the United Nations Conference in San Francisco. On 6 December 1945 he and the Council's secretary, Ihnat Lobach, wrote a letter to Archbishop Alexei, Representative of the Russian Orthodox Patriarch of Moscow in the United States. In it they stated that "Almost all Russians in Chicago are Belarusians", and then continued: "The Chicago Belarusians with all their heart greet the great and dear Church Representative (of the Moscow Patriarch – *A.N.*) in the person of His Grace Alexei, Archbishop of Iaroslav and Rostov, and wish him success in his great and difficult task for the glory of God, the wellbeing of the Church of Christ and the good of the peoples of the Soviet Union". Archbishop Alexei answered on 24 January 1946. Addressing his letter to "The Belarusians, dear to my heart" he wrote: "I hope that Belarusians, as genuinely Orthodox people, will listen to the voice of the Mother Church, come back to her fold, and thus make it easier for me to fulfill the mission which has been entrusted to me by His Holiness Alexi, Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia". The "Mother Church" was, of course, the Russian Orthodox Church, and the archbishop's mission was to persuade all Russians (among whom he included Belarusians and Ukrainians) in the United States to accept the authority of the Patriarch of Moscow. One may wonder what the reaction of this Russian prelate would have been if he had known that it was a Belarusian Catholic priest who wrote to him. What adds to the poignancy of this bizarre episode is the fact that at that time the Russian Orthodox Church, with the help of the Soviet Communist authorities, was on the point of destroying the Ukrainian Catholic Church. Eight months earlier, on 11 April 1945, the Communists had imprisoned Archbishop Joseph Slipyi and all Ukrainian Catholic bishops. There was no way Father Tarasevitch could have been unaware of this.

The behaviour of Father John Tarasevitch dismayed many Belarusians, especially the newly arrived refugees who had had first-hand experience of the "benefits" of the Soviet regime. In 1947 he resigned his post as chairman of the "White Russian American National Council", or perhaps was told to do so by his ecclesiastical superiors. He did not change his views, but kept them to himself and did not let them interfere with his priestly duties.

The bulk of new Belarusian emigrés arrived in Chicago about 1950. For their benefit in 1952 Father Tarasevitch began publishing a bulletin, entitled modestly *Listok k belarusam* (A Letter to Belarusians). The contents were purely religious, consisting of his homilies and religious poems which were remarkable mainly for their length. Among the new arrivals there was a number of Catholics. Some of them had known each other before 1939 when they were together at the university or at the Belarusian high school in Vilna. They all understood the importance of restoring the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church. Thanks to their efforts the nucleus of the future Belarusian parish of Christ the Redeemer was established in 1955, with its first pastor Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch. Initially, before they acquired their own church, the Liturgy was celebrated in the chapel of a Convent High School. Incidentally, in 1956 a "Unionistic Congress" was held at St Procopius Abbey. One of the monks of that abbey, Father Claude G. Viktora, presented a paper entitled "The Apostolate for

Reunion at St Procopius Abbey", in which among other things he said: "A most interesting development of the Apostolate in recent times has been the organization of a group of Orthodox Russian people in Chicago and vicinity, who under the able guidance of Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch, O.S.B., have been formed into a unit which soon promises to become a self-sustaining parochial organization with a Church and rectory of its own. For over a year, each Sunday, the Divine Liturgy is offered in the chapel of Josephinum High School in Chicago at 1515 N. Oakley Blvd"[35].

Father Sipovich was met by two of those "Orthodox Russians" when he came for the first time to Chicago on 2 November 1957. They were Anthony Bielenis and Vatslau Panutsevich. They were both Catholic-born Belarusians, as were their wives, Luise and Irene, sisters whose father, Edward Budzka, had been actively involved in the Belarusian national movement since before the First World War. Bielenis was educated by the Salesian Fathers. He was a man of upright character and profound but unostentatious piety. His steadying influence had a beneficial effect on the development of the parish. Panutsevich in 1956 started the journal *Belaruskaia Tsarkva* (Belarusian Church). Later Father Sipovich was to express criticism of this publication, both with regard to its title which smacked of nationalism, and the unnecessarily controversial nature of some of its articles.

Bielenis and Panutsevich took Father Sipovich to St Procopius Abbey. Father Chrysostrom Tarasevitch was away in Chicago, but they met Father Athanasius (Joseph) Reshats, a gentle and scholarly priest, author of several religious works in Belarusian. In 1925, soon after the resignation of Bishop George Matulewicz, he was dismissed from the post of professor at Vilna Diocesan Seminary. Prevented from working among his own people Father Reshats emigrated in 1938 to the United States and joined St Procopius Abbey, where his qualities as spiritual director and teacher were highly appreciated. Soon after his meeting with Father Sipovich he was diagnosed terminally ill with cancer. He died on 15 February 1958.

Later on the same day they met Father Chrysostom in Chicago, and he agreed for Father Sipovich to concelebrate and preach a sermon at the Liturgy for the Belarusian community on the following day, which was Sunday. Father Sipovich left the following description of this liturgy in his diary: "Bielenis took me to the chapel where we were going to celebrate the Liturgy. Father Tarasevitch was already there... He made the preparation (proskomidia) and, as the principal celebrant, began the liturgy. I was surprised that he did not offer to me, the guest, the first place, but then I realised that he was ill and for him to celebrate meant to live... After the consecration Fr Tarasevitch suddenly said: ‘I made a mistake. What shall I do?’ I told him that everything was in order and he should not worry. I don’t know when he thought he had made the mistake... After the Communion Fr Tarasevitch preached a short sermon which can be summarised in a few words: ‘We must love everyone... Thank you to all, especially the choir... I welcome Fr Sipovich... who will preach a sermon’. Indeed, in such circumstances I had no wish to say anything; nontheless I spoke as well as I could about the church, that it should not be empty, that in addition to the choir there should be also the faithful..."

Apart from New York and Chicago, Father Sipovich visited Washington, Philadelphia, Cleveland and Detroit in the United States, and, in Canada, Toronto, London and Barrie. He celebrated Liturgy, preached sermons, gave talks, met old

---

[35] *Proceedings of the First Unionistic Congress*, September 28,1956 to September 30, 1956. St Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Illinois, p.25

friends (a number of Belarusian families had emigrated to America from England), made new acquaintances etc. The three months spent in America helped him to form a good idea of the needs and problems of the Belarusian Community there. He became convinced of the need in the United States of a strong religious centre similar to Marian House. It seems that this idea had also occurred to other people. On 27 December 1957 Sipovich wrote to Tatarynovich about Father Charniauski: "He (and not only he!) tried to convince me to come to America and to establish there something similar to Marian House". By a strange coincidence on the same day Father Reshats also wrote to Father Tatarynovich: "Father Sipovich on American soil is a meteorite (in modern parlance "sputnik"), a bird of passage. He has his own Marian plans. Very probably, if he remains in America, he can do much good among Belarusians".

The American project was the subject of discussion in February 1958, when Father Haroshka came to London. The main reason for his visit was his intention to join the Marian Fathers. It is not known what made him take this momentous step. It is doubtful whether he suddenly felt a call to the "monastic" life. Most probably after years of strenuous work alone he had come to the end of his strength and became more receptive to the persuasions of Father Sipovich that it would be better all round if they joined forces.

The problem of who would take the place of Father Haroshka in Paris was solved by deciding to send Father Constantine Maskalik there, although it was obvious that he was unsuitable for this post. The efforts to keep the intended changes secret proved unsuccessful. The first person to have his suspicions was Mikola Abramtchyk, President of the Belarusian National Council. On 18 March 1958 Sipovich wrote to Haroshka: "It happened as you foresaw, and our secret has been discovered. I don’t know by whom and how, but it is not important. Sooner or later the matter must become known to all. Understandably, Mr Abramtchyk is defending his interests. I fully agree with everything he writes about your, and that Fr Maskalik will be incapable of doing half of the work you are doing. But Abramtchyk does not know our plans about America and about the Marian Fathers. I think it is sufficient to give him a general answer: we are fully conscious of our responsibility and are making the changes for the greater good of our people. What pains me is that Abramtchyk does not care about the Belarusian Catholics in the United States, for whom nothing has been done, and would be happy if we remained here and did not get in the way of the autocephalists (i.e. the Orthodox). Did you receive a similar letter? With Mr Abramtchyk and our other (political) leaders we must be very tactful, but without any deviations from our plans".

Abramtchyk communicated his suspicions to some Belarusians in the United States. One of them, Anthony Shukeloyts from New York, on his Easter greeting card, dated 1 April 1958, made the following note: "Please tell me what sort of changes you are planning, and what is their purpose? The President (Abramtchyk) is very worried about the (intended) transfer of Father Haroshka to London, fearing this might be the ruin of the Belarusian community in Paris". Sipovich answered on 11 April: "There is good hope that Marian House will remain in the hands of Belarusian Marian Fathers. But where are they? Hermanovich and Los’ are not allowed to leave Poland. This means something must be done here so that I don’t have to remain alone... You say that the departure of Father Haroshka from Paris will cause the ruin of our community there. One person does not constitute a community. And if it (the community) is such that everything depends on one person, then it is a pity to waste Father Leo on it. He is needed for a more numerous public... You well know the situation of Belarusian Catholics in America and who is there to serve their needs.

We must not forget about them, irrespective of whether we are wanted there or not. Personally I feel best in London, where life is well ordered, we have our own place and there is plenty of work. But ‘the time will come, when somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go...’ (Jn 21:18). In our priestly life we go where there is greater need".

The purpose of the changes proposed by Father Sipovich and Haroshka was the establishment of a religious house of Belarusian Marian Fathers in London, with its possible extension at a later date to the United States. Obviously two priests were not enough, and so Father Sipovich tried to bring to London some Belarusian Marian Fathers from Poland. His previous attempts in this respect had brought no result. This was strange, since, despite the Communist regime in their country, Polish priests were coming and going with comparative ease, especially after 1956. Father Sipovich decided to concentrate his efforts on two priests, Joseph Hermanovich and Anthony Los’. Father Los’, who was comparatively young and practically unknown to Belarusians (he had been ordained in 1946 in Poland), would have been a valuable addition to the Belarusian Marian community in London because of his youth. However, he seemed not very keen to come to work in the West. Father Hermanovich, on the other hand, was well known among Belarusians throughout the world both as a priest and a writer. After his release from a Soviet prison camp in 1955 he was deported against his will to Poland, but had no intention of remaining there any more than he had in 1938. The attempts to get Hermanovich out of Poland started in 1957, but his applications for permission to go to Rome, ostensibly for a visit, were consistently rejected by the authorities who were suspicious of his true motives. But it was not only the civil authorities who made difficulties. Father Tatarynovich wrote to Sipovich on 6 September 1957: "A moment ago I telephoned to Via Corsica (the general headquarters of the Marian Fathers – *A.N.*) and asked how the things stood about the coming of Fr Hermanovich and Los’. In the absence of the Superior General, it was Father Lysik who answered, saying that he had received no reply to several of his letters. When I suggested that the cause of difficulties were the civil authorities, he tried to explain that there was some sort of your (i.e.Marian – *A.N.*) internal monastic complications: they have a different point of view there (i.e. in Poland – *A.N.*) on who should go. Sapienti – sat...". Father Sipovich wrote in a similar mood to Father Haroshka on 6 November 1959: "When Father Mroczek was in Rome, he was always finding some reasons why Belarusian Fathers should not be moved from Poland, although Polish students and priests were coming and going, and no harm was done to anyone". Father Wladyslaw Mroczek, a Pole, was Superior General of the Marian Fathers from 1951 to 1957.

One of the first "casualties" of Father Haroshka’s decision to join the Marian Congregation was the journal *Bozhym shliakham*. The patterns of its publication reflected the degree of exhaustion of the editor who produced it practically single-handedly. It began in 1947 as a monthly, only to become bimonthly after one year. In 1955 there appeared three issues, and in 1956 only one. Father Haroshka was late with the 1957 issue but was determined to get it ready for publication before entering the novitiate.

There was no study week of "Run’" in 1958. Instead, Belarusians (practically all members of "Run’") took part in the Marian Congress in Lourdes on 14-18 September. They formed their own separate section there, which, in addition to taking part in general events, had its own programme. In particular Father Sipovich read a paper on "Francis Skaryna’s devotion to the Mother of God".

The most important event in 1958 which affected the whole Catholic Church was the death on 9 October of the Pope Pius XII. He had ruled the Church at the most

difficult time of the Second World War and the postwar period of confrontation between the Soviet Union and the West. On 28 October a new Pope was elected. He was John XXIII who initiated the period of greater openness in the government of the Church, and astonished the world by announcing his intention to call a new General Council. Although the Belarusians did not realise it at the moment, these momentous changes in the Catholic Church would have an important impact on their affairs.

On Sunday 21 December 1958 in Paris, after the liturgy there was a party at which Belarusians said farewell to Father Haroshka and welcomed Father Maskalik. On 30 December Father Haroshka wrote to Sipovich: "There was a considerable number of people at the farewell Liturgy and party... In general it was noticeable that everyone tried to make Father Constantine welcome, and invited him to visit them. Now we visit together those whom we can, but my impression is that after my departure he will not find his way to their homes". This impression proved to be true...

Father Haroshka left Paris by train on Sunday 4 January 1959 and arrived in Rome the following day.

## 11. The Wind of Change

For the Catholic Church the year 1959 started full of the excitement which the new 77-year old Pope had managed to create. The most popular word was "aggiornamento", or bringing the Church up-to date, finding the most suitable and efficacious ways and means to proclaim the eternal and unchanging Gospel of Salvation in the rapidly changing modern world. It was this atmosphere of excitement and expectation which pervaded the whole of the short pontificate of John XXIII.

One may speculate whether the general atmosphere pervading the whole Church affected the Belarusians, but among them too there were changes in the air. With Father Haroshka in the Marian novitiate it seemed that Father Sipovich's dream of a "Second Druia" was beginning to take shape. The fact that this was at the expense of pastoral work among the Belarusian community in France showed the need for a better coordination of the activities of the few Belarusian priests working in different countries. To solve this and other problems it was proposed to call a reunion of Belarusian priests. The idea of such a reunion was obviously a subject of discussion between Sipovich and Haroshka for some time. After his arrival in Rome and before entering the novitiate Father Haroshka went to see Cardinal Tisserant at the Oriental Congregation. Here is what he wrote on 22 January 1959 to Father Sipovich: "I mentioned to him (i.e. Tisserant) the matter of our reunion of all Belarusian priests; the Cardinal did not object and said that he would help such a reunion... I think that it is best to send now a short letter to all (priests) with the proposed agenda and a provisional date, so that all may answer and send in their proposals".

In his answer of 5 February Father Sipovich suggested that the reunion should take place at Marian House about the middle of 1960. The reason for choosing such a late date was that by then Father Haroshka would have finished his novitiate, and Alexander Nadson and John Sadouski – their studies. He also agreed to be responsible for all the preparatory work, because Father Haroshka, being a novice, could not do it.

Father Haroshka answered on 12 February: "With regard to the place of the reunion, in my opinion and that of all other Roman priests it can only be Rome, because the main purpose of the reunion will be not talks among ourselves, but talks with the Vatican, and, most important of all, an audience with the Holy Father". He also proposed the following provisional programme: 1. Survey of the religious state of the Belarusian emigration; 2. Distribution of duties among priests; 3. To try to find a way for the affairs of Belarusian Catholics of both rites to be entrusted to the competence of one single Vatican congregation; 4. Preparation of a joint memorandum to the Holy Father; 5. The question of the beatification of Abrantovich and Tsikota.

Before Sipovich could answer, he received another letter from Haroshka, dated 6 March, in which he wrote: "Last week Bishop Sloskans was here... I told him about our project and the Cardinal's approval of it. After a moment's reflection, he became animated and said: 'Then write the letter and I shall sign it and give it to the Cardinal, because I have to see him'. After such a conversation it was impossible to postpone the matter, and I, having got in touch with Tatarynovich... wrote the letter, agreed (its text) with the Bishop, and the day before yesterday he handed this letter to the Cardinal". The answer of the Congregation was very quick. In a letter dated 7 March it approved the idea of a reunion and promised a grant of 500,000 Italian Lira towards its expenses.

Bishop Sloskans was not very active and did not show much initiative, partially because of his age and health. But he did care about the Belarusians and tried to help and support them in his way. One of the reasons for his visit to Rome was a private audience with Pope John XXIII which took place on 5 March. During the audience Sloskans in his capacity as Apostolic Administrator of Mahilou and Minsk, and Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians in Western Europe, asked the Holy Father to impart the Apostolic blessing to all Belarusian Catholic priests in exile and to the entire Belarusian nation.

Before leaving Paris Father Haroshka left the 1957 issue of *Bozhym shliakham* with the printers, asking them to forward proofs to him in Rome. This resulted in further delays. One of the articles in that issue was a life of Father Fabian Abrantovich written by Father Sipovich. Father Haroshka showed the article to Father Tatarynovich. On 6 March he wrote to Sipovich that "He (i. e. Tatarynovich – *A.N.*) quite reasonably advised caution when publishing anything about Kolpinski, because the Russians and especially the Jesuits may become spiteful and create obstacles in the cause of beatification. If we keep silent about Nailovich, then we can say nothing about Kolpinski either, because this is not a bright, but shadowy episode".

Diodore Kolpinski was a Russian Catholic priest whom Abrantovich knew from St Petersburg, and who in the 1920s was living in Poland. When Abrantovich was appointed to Harbin in 1928, he asked for Kolpinski as his assistant. Unfortunately their cooperation was a failure, they soon fell out, and Kolpinski left Harbin for Shanghai where he died in 1932. Casimir Nailovich was a Druia cleric who was sent to the Russicum in 1929. In 1935, when already a priest, he went to Harbin. In 1943 he left both the Marian Congregation and the Catholic Church, and married a Russian divorcee in the Orthodox church. At that time the superior in Harbin was Father Tsikota. These episodes were regrettable but in no way secret, and if it came to the beatification process of Abrantovich or Tsikota (and that was one of the points proposed for the forthcoming reunion of Belarusian priests) they would naturally have had to be fully investigated. Thus keeping silent about them would achieve nothing. Father Sipovich was against dropping the Kolpinski episode from his article. Nevertheless Father Haroshka "having considered calmly before God", as he wrote in his letter of 7 April, decided to omit it.

Marian House with its Byzantine rite chapel was one of the first permanent Eastern Catholic places of worship in England. The interest in Eastern Christianity among English Catholics has a long and distinguished history. One may mention the works of Father Adrian Fortescue at the beginning of the 20th century; the Society of Saint John Chrysostom which was founded in 1926 ; and Dom Bede Winslow, a Benedictine monk and his *Eastern Churches Quarterly* which he started in 1931 and continued till his death in 1959. There were conferences, discussions, publications and occasional celebrations of the Eastern Liturgy in a Roman Catholic church by a visiting Eastern priest. All these activities, valuable as they were, had a scholarly, somewhat remote character. With the establishment of Marian House and Ukrainian churches in various towns the Latin faithful could walk in any Sunday and take part in the Byzantine Liturgy in its natural surroundings. This would help them realise the proper meaning of the catholicity of the Church, namely that the unity of faith does not mean the uniformity of worship. The realisation that the Eastern Catholics and the Orthodox share the same spiritual and cultural heritage could lead to mutual respect and understanding which must be the basis of any work for the Union of all in One Holy Church.

There were many English visitors to Marian House, both individuals and groups. The majority of them after one or two visits disappeared forever. Others stayed longer, sang in the church choir and took part in other activities. A few of them became regular "parishioners". One of these was Guy Picarda who came to Marian House in the early 1950s, when he was still a student at Oxford, in search of Byzantine church music and has remained a faithful friend ever since. He did much to make Belarus, her history and culture known in the English-speaking world. His contribution in the field of study of Belarusian church music – a subject hitherto practically unknown, – has been appreciated both in Belarus and abroad. For many years he conducted the choir at Marian House. Another faithful English parishioner and friend is the poet Vera Rich who has become well known for her fine translations into English of works of Belarusian poets.

In compliance with Bishop Buchys's instruction of 1950, an "Eastern Praesidium" of the Legion of Mary was set up at Marian House, with Father Sipovich as their chaplain. Its members were pleasant English and Irish young people (there were no Belarusians among them), pious and always ready to help. One of the aims of the Legion of Mary is to engage, within the parish framework and under the guidance of the parish priest, in the work of evangelisation and pastoral care. In the specific situation of the Belarusian Mission it was difficult to think what they could do, especially since they did not know the Belarusian language or the Byzantine rite. Nevertheless they seemed to have enjoyed being vaguely "Oriental", but with a few exceptions they did not develop any deeper interest in the Eastern Christianity or in Belarus.

Another organisation based at Marian House was the Society of Saint John Chrysostom. The aims of the Society were "to make known to Western Christians the history, worship and spirituality of Eastern Christendom, and to work and pray that all men, and in particular the separated Eastern Christians, may speedily be united in One Church of Christ". It was founded in 1926, apparently not without help of d'Herbigny, but ceased its activities after the outbreak of the war in 1939. Father Sipovich started thinking about reviving it as early as 1948 but did not succeed until 1959. He was helped in this by Helle Georgiades, a Greek who before becoming a Catholic, had been secretary of a joint Anglican-Orthodox organisation called the Society of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius. The President of the Saint John Chrysostom Society was the Archbishop of Westminster. Father Sipovich was the secretary (after his elevation to the bishopric he became the Honorary Vice President) and Miss Georgiades – editor of the newly launched journal *Chrysostom*. In the years that followed the Society did much to spread knowledge about the Eastern Christian tradition among English speaking Catholics. It also became the champion of the cause of Eastern Catholics whom some "Latins" in the name of wrongly understood ecumenism considered an obstacle to "ecumenical contacts" with the Orthodox.

Father Sipovich had always been a great book lover. At Marian House his initial modest collection of books rapidly grew into a small but well equipped library. There were two main sections: religious which, together with theolgical and devotional books, contained a number of works on Eastern Christianity and problems of Christian Unity; and Belarusian, consisting of books and periodicals in Belarusian as well as in other languages on Belarus, some of them very rare. This eventually became the basis of the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library, which was officially opened in 1971.

On 6 July 1959 Father Alexander Nadson came back to London after six years of absence. In 1953 he had gone to Rome to study for the priesthood and had been admitted to the Greek College. He was ordained on 23 November 1958. Father Sipovich cherished the hope that Nadson, whom he had known since 1945, would join the Marian Congregation, and was disappointed when this did not happen. This did not prevent them from remaining on friendly terms and working closely together for many years. Father Nadson took over some of Father Sipovich's pastoral duties, in particular visits to Belarusian communities outside London.

With another priest in London to help him, Father Sipovich could concentrate on preparing for the proposed reunion of priests. This involved writing to everyone concerned, asking them for suggestions about the most convenient date and the programme. Not all the priests were equally enthusiastic. Father Charniauski wrote from the United States that he did not see the point of the reunion "because nothing will come out of it". Good Father Salaviej from Germany liked the idea very much, but as to the suggestions he wrote: "You, Father, know our needs, and we shall talk about them. In my view – I don't know whether it is good or not – what can a nightingale add to it?" (In Belarusian *salaviej* means *nightingale*). Father Tatarynovich also had his doubts, perhaps he was afraid of criticism of certain linguistic innovations in his publications. In the end, however, he was most helpful and did everything for the reunion to be a success. It was he who found the venue for it at 24 via Camiluccia, the priests' residence where he himself lived. Eventually all difficulties had been overcome, the programme agreed and approved by Bishop Sloskans, and the date fixed for 1-6 February 1960, i. e. two weeks after the end of Father Haroshka's novitiate.

In the meantime Father Hermanovich had at last obtained a passport and permission to travel abroad. As he explained later, he accused the Polish authorities of discrimination because he was Belarusian, and this seemed to have worked... On Saturday 24 October he arrived in Rome. Father Haroshka wrote on the same day to Sipovich, telling him the joyful news. On his arrival, Father Hermanovich said that Father Los' and other younger Belarusian priests had no chance of coming abroad, because the Polish authorities would never allow it. Secondly he announced that he had no intention of going back to Poland. This did not please the Superior General and the Council of Marian Fathers in Rome, who feared repercussions on the part of the Polish authorities. But Father Hermanovich was firm, and they had to give in.

The Belarusian Marian Fathers were not the only ones who felt the effect of discrimination. Father Vatslau Anoshka, a Greek Catholic priest, whom Exarch Niemantsevich had appointed his deputy, escaped to Poland towards the end of the war, after being saved at the last moment from being shot by the Soviet Communist partisans. When he heard about the proposed reunion of Belarusian priests in Rome, he wanted to come, but the Polish authorities did not let him.

In Rome Father Hermanovich wrote a short account, dated 9 November 1959, of the Harbin Mission and the fate of its priests. Among other things he said: "We, the Marian religious, destined for the Mission in Harbin, were all Belarusians, and we worked for God and the Church, and for a... foreign country, namely Russia which for centuries has been hostile to us (laboravimus pro Deo et Ecclesia, et pro patria... aliena, scilicet russa, quae a saeculis fuit nobis inimica)". He finished his account with the demand that the time had come for them to work for their own people.

On 11 November the Holy Father John XXIII relieved Cardinal Eugene Tisserant of the post of the head (secretary) of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and appointed in his place Cardinal Amleto Cicognani. Tisserant was a distinguished orientalist with an intimate knowledge of the Christian East. But he was first and foremost a priest, for whom considerations of a pastoral nature took precedence over all else. After over 23 years at the head of the Oriental Congregation (he was appointed in 1936) such a change was almost inevitable. Yet for many his departure seemed like the end of an era.

Belarusians have every reason to remember Cardinal Tisserant (1884-1972) with gratitude. He was the first high Vatican prelate who showed sympathy and understanding of their needs, and came to their assistance in a very concrete way. After his departure there was a moment of anxiety whether the new head of the Oriental Congregation would continue the policy of his predecessor with regard to Belarusians. Fortunately he did, perhaps due to the fact that the lower rank officials of the Congregation remained the same, in particular Mgr Moioli who was in charge of Belarusian affairs. Father Sipovich wrote on 26 November to Bishop Sloskans: "You most probably know already that H. Em. Cardinal Tisserant left the Oriental Congregation and in his place came H. Em. Cardinal Cicognani. It all happened unexpectedly, but God's will be done! We must slowly and systematically carry out our plans, and I don't think that we need ask permission again. When the communiquè is ready, we shall send it to the Congregation together with a letter reminding them of help they promised for our reunion".

As the time of the reunion drew near, it was evident that only priests from Western Europe would be present; those from the United States and Argentina could not come because of the costs involved. Shortly before the opening date Bishop Sloskans fell ill, and it became doubtful whether he would be able to come to Rome. Fortunately he recovered in time. Thus on Monday 1 February at 9.30 a.m, there were present, apart from Bishop Sloskans, nine priests: Joseph Hermanovich, Leo Haroshka, Peter Tatarynovich and John Sadouski from Rome; Ceslaus Sipovich and Alexander Nadson from London; Constantine Maskalik from Paris; Michael Maskalik from Goslar and Uladzimier Salaviej from Schongau in Germany. The first day was one of recollection and prayer. It was conducted by Bishop Sloskans. Tuesday 2 February was the first working day. The main topics for discussion were outlined in the papers: "Religious problems of Belarusian emigration" (Haroshka), "How to organise pastoral work among Belarusians" (Sipovich), and "The Belarusian religious press" (Tatarynovich).

All those present were unanimous in stressing the need for a Belarusian bishop who would direct and coordinate the activities of priests in various countries. It was generally felt that the bishop should belong to the Byzantine rite but also have jurisdiction over priests of the Roman (Latin) rite. Bishop Sloskans, to whom Belarusians owed much, was the first to insist that the time had come for them to have their own bishop. At the same time he explained that he would like to retain the title of Apostolic Administrator of Mahilou and Minsk which was a link with Belarus and might prove useful in the future, e.g. accepting candidates for the priesthood. If he resigned, the Holy See would appoint no one in his place, and thus this link would be broken.

The comparatively small number of priests and great dispersion of the faithful created its own problems. It was suggested that perhaps instead of priests living alone at great distances from one another it would be more sensible to establish pastoral

centres which would serve large areas. One such centre could be London and the area covered would include also France and Belgium. However this suggestion did not meet with general approval.

The situation in the United States was considered. There already existed a Belarusian Greek Catholic centre in Chicago under the direction of Benedictines from Lisle. But this was not sufficient. It was proposed that Fathers Sipovich and Hermanovich should go to the States and try to establish a centre similar to that in London somewhere in the vicinity of New York, where there was the largest concentration of Belarusians. In this case Father Haroshka would be left in charge in London. Subsequent events made this project impractical.

In the situation in which Belarusians found themselves in the West, the apostolate through the press was of particular importance: it provided a means of reaching people with whom personal contact was impossible or very difficult. It was decided to make an appeal for support for two existing well established journals, namely *Bozhym shliakham* and *Znic*. It was stressed that a religious journal is just another method of spreading the Word of God, and for this reason its character must be such as to attract people and give them spiritual nourishment. Extraneous subjects, especially those which might give offence or provoke controversy, should be avoided. The problem of religious radio broadcasts was also discussed, in particular Belarusian broadcasts on Vatican Radio which had been started by Father Tatarynovich ten years earlier. A recommendation wqas made to try to use more efficiently the facilities provided by other broadcasting companies which had broadcasts in Belarusian, such as Radio "Liberty" in Munich and Spanish Radio in Madrid. The importance of radio broadcasts was that they could also be heard, albeit with difficulty, in Belarus.

In general it was stressed that the priest should be above all political divisions. For him to be Belarusian meant to feel responsible to God for the souls of all Belarusians irrespective of their political and other opinions. In general it was affirmed that the priestly vocation was a call to holiness, and that the priest should be a witness of the Truth of Christ not only in words, but with his whole life.

Much time was given to discussing and writing a petition to the Holy Father. Initially it was not known whether the Holy Father would receive the Belarusian priests. Only on Thursday 4 February did the news come that the Holy Father would receive in private audience all participants of the reunion on Saturday 6 February.

These were the main points of the petition:

"We, Belarusian priests in exile, scattered throughout various countries and engaged in pastoral work among our compatriots; and Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans, Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians of Byzantine rite, gathered in Rome on 1-6 February 1960, having discussed and seriously considered before God matters of greatest importance, so that the Kingdom of Christ may spread in the souls of our Belarusian brothers, dare to ask you the following:

1. The appointment of a Belarusian bishop in Europe with sufficient powers to coordinate and direct the pastoral care of Belarusians;

2. The appointment of a Belarusian bishop with the title of Exarch or at least Apsotolic Visitor, with sufficient powers in the United States of America and Canada, where the bulk of Belarusian emigration is concentrated;

3. The appointment of a Belarusian Delegate to the Supreme Council for Emigrants;

4. Financial help for the establishment in the United States of a religious house of the Marian Fathers, together with a church, Apostolic School, junior seminary and missionary centre;

5. A subsidy for the publication of journals in the Belarusian language for distribution in Europe and in America".

Then follows brief information about the Catholic Church in Belarus, its history and present state, as well as the problems of the Belarusian community in exile, the dangers of their being lost to the Catholic Church because of the lack of pastoral care. It is because of this danger and in order to be able to organise effective pastoral care that a Belarusian bishop was needed. It was also pointed out that "It would be painful for our people, if in the forthcoming General Council there were no Belarusian bishop present (Doloroso etiam populo nostro esset, si in Concilio futuro Oecumenico Hierarcha Alboruthenus abesset)... In recent times we had men whose merits were great in the sight of the Church and our people... and it is only political circumstances and hate of the Belarusian Church that prevented us from venerating them as our bishops. However, their merits make us more bold in the present time to ask this favour from the Holy See".

The petition was signed by Bishop Sloskans and all priests present at the reunion.

The papal audience took place on Saturday 6 February at 11 a.m. The Holy Father first received Bishop Sloskans alone, then after a few minutes all others were admitted to his study. Pope John XXIII put everyone at ease in his inimitable manner. He took time to talk to everyone personally, advised Father Hermanovich to try "not to fall again into the hands of your enemies", and remarked about Father Salaviej who was not exactly a lightweight: "Questo é una figura imposante (this one is an imposing figure)". On the serious side he said that while he could promise nothing at the moment, he would study seriously all the requests in the petition. One could feel that he would keep his word. In the end he gave his Apostolic blessing to all present.

After the papal audience Father Salaviej announced publicly that now that he had won the admiration of the Holy Father, he would eat twice as much...

The reunion was over, but on Monday 8 February all the participants had audiences with Cardinal Cicognani at the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, and Cardinal Siri at the Consistorial Congregation. Both prelates received copies of the petition to the Holy Father. Father Sipovich in the name of all thanked Cardinal Cicognani for the grant of 500 thousand Lira towards the expenses of the reunion. Cardinal Siri was asked to appoint Father Tatarynovich as Belarusian representative on the Supreme Papal Council for the Emigration.

After these audiences the whole group went to the Basilica of Saint Peter to pray at the tomb of the First Apostle.

The last visit was on Tuesday 9 February to Cardinal Tisserant who, after leaving the Oriental Congregation, had been appointed prefect of the Vatican Library, to thank him for everything he had done for Belarusians. In a letter, which was signed by all, they said among other things: "The undersigned Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans and the Belarusian Catholic priests, on the occasion of their reunion in Rome, which was made possible thanks to your benevolence and your help, express their sincere thanks for everything you have done for Belarusians (Tibi pro omnibus, quae pro Alboruthenis fecisti gratias maximas exprimunt)... Since it is the will of the Holy Father that you should no longer be involved in our affairs, there remains nothing else for us except to remember you, Eminenent Father, before God that He may for many years grant you excellent health and abundance of grace; and humbly ask you for your help and protection".

The Roman reunion was the first official meeting, a kind of "mini-synod", of Belarusian priests engaged in pastoral work among Belarusians in various countries. They represented a certain organisational unity thanks to the person of the Apostolic Visitor who acted as a link between them. The main purpose of the meeting was to find the best ways to minister to the spiritual welfare of the people entrusted into their care, and to spread the Kingdom of God among their countrymen in exile, while not losing sight of the much wider issue of the religious needs of the whole Belarusian nation. The reunion took place with the knowledge and approval of the highest Church authorities, so there was good reason to hope that they would listen to the requests of its participants.

## 12. The Bishop

The reunion over, everyone settled down to wait. Knowing how the Roman Curia worked, they were prepared to wait for a long time. They did not reckon with Pope John XXIII...

Before leaving Rome, on 8 February Fathers Sipovich, Hermanovich and Haroshka wrote a letter to the Superior General of Marian Fathers, asking him: 1. that Fathers Hermanovich and Haroshka be sent to London (ut Patres Josephus Hermanovi≠c et Leo Horo≠sko Londinium in domum nostram Marianam [Sectio Alboruthena] destinentur); 2. that Fathers Anthony Los', Felix Zhurnia, Thomas Padziava and Boniface Sarul should be called from Poland to Rome or to other place in the free world in order to help the other Belarusian Marian Fathers in their work. If for political reasons this was impossible, then the Polish Marian province should recompense Belarusians for the said Belarusian Marians' work.

In his written answer of 13 February the Superior General raised no objections to Father Haroshka going to London. He expressed certain reservations with regard to Father Hermanovich whose Polish passport was valid only for a visit to Italy. If he applied for another travel document, e.g. the Vatican service passport, the Polish Communist authorities could find out, and then make difficulties for other Marian Fathers in Poland who would like to go abroad. Of course there was no question of Polish Marian Fathers recompensing Belarusians for their work.

But Father Hermanovich had had enough of the Communists, whether of the Polish or the Soviet variety. On 9 February, without waiting for the Superior General's reply, he applied for a Vatican service passport. By the end of February he and Father Haroshka were already in London where they joined Sipovich and Nadson. Of these four priests only Nadson did not belong to the Marian Congregation.

It was not till four months later, on 9 June 1960, that the three Belarusian Marian Fathers answered the letter of the Superior General of 13 February. In it they repeated their demand that the four Belarusian priests named in their previous letter should be allowed to come to the West. They reminded the Superior general of a similar request made by Father Sipovich on 22 December 1946 which, although very modest, had had no effect because of the "unfounded opposition of Rev. Fr Mroczek who was then the General Councillor, and the Polish province (nullum tamen effectum ob non fundatam oppositionem tum R.P. Mroczek tunc temporis Consiliarii Generalis tum Provinciae Polonae obtinere)". Referring to Mroczek's arguments against Sipovich that balance and justice had been maintained between the work of Polish priests in Druia and Belarusian priests exiled in Poland, the authors had this to say: "In his calculations Rev. Fr Mroczek seems to have omitted some details of greatest importance, namely that our (i.e. Belarusian) Fathers from Druia could never perform in the Polish Province the work which they did in Druia, while, on the contrary, the Polish Fathers (in Druia) have been carrying out work in the Polish spirit. It is known to us that during the whole period of their presence in Druia and Vilna the Polish Marian Fathers had not even one Belarusian candidate for the priesthood, nor did they preach a single sermon in the Belarusian language"[36]. Conceding the difficulties experienced by the Church in Communist Poland, the

[36] "Toto tempore suae existentiae Drujae et Vilnae Patres Mariani Poloni neque unum candidatum Alboruthenum ad sacerdotium accepisse neque unam praedicationem in lingua Alboruthena pronuntiavisse nobis in comperto est".

authors went on to say that these could not be compared with the tragic situation in Belarus, where for nearly 2 million faithful there was not even one bishop, very few priests, no seminary, no religious house. Moreover "Those few Polish priests who are still there, blinded by extreme Polish nationalism, perform their pastoral work in the Polish language, and in this way, at least indirectly, help the atheists in their perfidious machinations"[37].

This was strong language, and one could feel the influence of Father Haroshka who did not like to mince his words. There is no record of the reply of the Superior General. Perhaps there never was one, because events began to move quickly.

On Monday 4 July after the liturgy Father Sipovich received the following telegram: "Pregola venire quanto prima Roma per comunicazioni urgenti. Padre Coussa Assessore" (Please come as soon as possible to Rome for important communications. Father Coussa Assessor). Father Acacius Coussa, a Melchite Aleppine monk, was second in command at the Oriental Congregation.

Here is what Father Sipovich wrote in the diary: "I showed the telegram to Fr Joseph Hermanovich, then to Fr Leo Haroshka. All decided that I should take a plane. Various thoughts and guesses".

On the following day: "Father Nadson comes back from Nottingham. He congratulates me on the bishopric...". The whole day was spent in preparation: "I give Father Haroshka account books of Marian House, and leave Fr Alexander (Nadson) in charge of the Mission in England until my return".

On Wednesday 6 July: "I make my confession to Fr Joseph Hermanovich. He tells me to approach the bishopric with the fear of God, faith and love. We celebrate Divine Liturgy. Father Alexander says that I should wear the silver vestments and be the chief celebrant. Why? I don’t know. But I obey our good master of ceremonies. Breakfast. I ask the blessing of Fr Joseph Hermanovich and together with Fr Leo Haroshka go... to the air terminal... Only few minutes remain to talk with Fr Leo... I arrived in Rome at 1.05 p.m. exactly". On the next day, Thursday 7 July came the visit to the Oriental Congregation: "I wait for the call from Father Coussa and pray. About 11 a.m. he invites me to his office. We sit down. He opens the envelopes of the letters he received and asks me in indifferent tone about the Mission in London... Then: ‘What if we made you a bishop, assistant to Bishop Sloskans, with the title of Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians?’. I am very moved. I answer that as a religious I made a vow never to seek any dignities in the Marian Congregation or outside it. He just waved his hand and said:’I also am a religious, but I am told, and I do what the Holy Father wants me to do’. Then he took me by the hand, led me to the adjoining empty room and said:’pray and think. I shall call you back in half an hour’. I prayed and thought... In my ears there were the words of Father Haroshka before my departure from London: ‘If they offer you the bishopric, accept it. If you refuse, they will give us nothing!’. I take the piece of paper and write with trembling hand: ‘I feel unworthy to be a bishop. All my life I have tried to be obedient to my superiors, especially to the Holy Father. I accept the dignity of a bishop not because of any of my merits, but as a sign of the Holy Father’s love for my longsuffering Belarusian people’. I wrote these few sentences with many mistakes, not intending to show them to anyone. But Fr Coussa took them, read, said ‘Molto bene’ (Very good) and kept it.

[37] "Pauci illi sacredotes Poloni qui ibidem habentur nationalismo exagerato obcaecati operam pastoralem in lingua Polona adhuc performant, ut quin dubio hoc modo saltem indirecte atheistas in eorum machinationibus perfidis adiuvent".

Mgr Coussa and many others began to congratulate me, call me ‘Eccellenza’..." Then there was a talk with Mgr Moioli who was in charge of Belarusian affairs. They were interrupted by Father Coussa who said that Cardinal Cicognani, head of the Oriental Congregation, wanted to see the new bishop-elect. The Cardinal was very gracious and told Father Sipovich: "You will be a good bishop and do much good for your people". From the Oriental Congregation Father Sipovich went straight to the Basilica of St Peter to pray at the tomb of the First Apostle. Thus ended this truly memorable day.

The following days were spent in preparation for the consecration. On 9 July Father Sipovich paid a visit to the Ukrainian Archbishop Ivan Buchko and asked him to be his chief consecrator, to which the archbishop readily agreed. On 15 July there was an audience with Cardinal Tisserant who blessed Father Sipovich and said "Lei è stato un buono sacerdote, sarà buono vescovo" (you have been a good priest, and will be a good bishop). Then, as Sipovich noted in his diary, he added: "It is very important for peoples who are suffering religious persecution and where religion is being suppressed to have their own bishops. I believe that the news about you will raise the spirit of your people in your native country. Your nomination is also important because of the Ecumenical Council". In his diary Sipovich made the following comments: "For the first time I have heard about the true reasons for my nomination. Until now I have been paid many compliments, but nobody mentioned the essential". On 17-24 July Father Sipovich made a retreat at Assisi. On his return to Rome he was told that his consecration would take place on Thursday 4 August at the church of St Anne in Munich during the Eucharistic Congress. It was intended to be the "coronamento" (the crowning point) of the Congress’s "Clergy day".

Father Sipovich arrived in Munich on Tuesday 2 August. He was met at the station by Belarusian priests and faithful who had come for this occasion from all over Europe. At the clergy residence, Pius Maria Heim, where a room was reserved for him, there was a small incident, insignificant in itself, but indicative of the difficulties which Belarusians encountered everywhere. On the door of his room there was a card with his name written on it, and "Polen" (Poland – *A.N.*) as the country of origin. Sipovich wrote in his diary: "I asked Fr Salaviej, my secretary during the Congress, that it should be immediately changed to ‘Weissruthene’ (Belarusian – *A.N.*), which was done".

Thursday 4 August. Outside the church of St Anne in the centre of Munich hangs Belarusian white-red-white flag. In the church by the altar a procession banner with the icon of Our Lady of Zhyrovitsy, the most famous Belarusian Marian sanctuary. The church is full to overflowing long before 9 a.m., when the liturgy is due to begin. The solemn Pontifical Liturgy is concelebrated by three bishops and five priests. The chief celebrant is Archbishop Ivan Buchko; he is assisted by Bishop Platon Kornylak, the Ukrainian exarch for Ukrainians in Germany, and Andrew Katkov, ordaining bishop of Byzantine rite in Rome. On the right side of the High Altar on a special podium – Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans, Apostolic Administrator of Mahilou and Minsk, wearing mitre and cope. Also in the sanctuary there are Bishops Bukatko, Shmondziuk and Prashko (Ukrainians), Gawlina (Pole), and bishops from Ghana and Madagascar. After the Little Entrance Fathers Leo Haroshka and Michael Maskalik conduct Father Sipovich (still in priestly robes) to Archbishop Buchko. Monisgnor Giuseppe Moioli, representative of the Oriental Congregation, reads the Papal Bull in Latin: "Joannes Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei dilecto filio Ceslao

Sipovich... salutem et apostolicam benedictionem... John Bishop, Servant of the servants of God, to our beloved son Ceslaus Sipovich... greetings and apostolic blessing. Insofar as the Sacred Council in charge of the affairs of the Eastern Church has deemed it timely that the Belarusian faithful of Eastern rite, residing for whatever reason outside their country, be provided for, We having willingly accepted this... have considered you, beloved son, whose outstanding spiritual and intellectual virtues and proven piety towards God clearly recommend, a fitting (person) to be entrusted with this task. And that you may perform your office more profitably... with our apostolic power we nominate you Bishop of the titular see of Mariamme..."[38].

Father Salaviej reads the Papal Bull in Belarusian.

Then the act of consecration began. Here is what Bishop Sipovich himself wrote in his diary: "Fathers Haroshka and M. Maskalik conduct me to the altar. I begin to recite the Profession of Faith. After the second Profession of Faith my feet started feeling as if they did not belong to me... Soon (for me) comes the most important moment. I am given the staff. I kneel. The heavy Book of Gospels is placed over my head. It seems that no one is holding the book, it presses me, and if I had no staff for support, most probably I would not be able to stand it. I pray as well as I can and know that the Holy Spirit would give me strength in my episcopal state. Then comes the robing and the unforgettable "Axios!" (Greek acclamation meaning "He is worthy" – *A.N.*). I exchange greetings with all bishops... By the grace of God I am already Bishop".

To this description it may be added that at the moment of consecration all bishops present came together for the laying on of hands.

After the consecration the Liturgy resumed with the new bishop standing on the right hand of the chief celebrant. After the Liturgy he went down the aisle to the main entrance, blessing the faithful.

During the reception after the Liturgy Bishop Sipovich spoke in Belarusian, Latin and English. He thanked God for the grace of the fullness of priesthood, and for the Vicar of Christ on earth, Pope John XXIII who had listened to the requests of Belarusian priests and faithful and given them a Belarusian bishop. Archbishop Buchko in Ukrainian expressed the joy because of the restoration of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church. He had also a few words of "consolation" to the new bishop, saying: "The first seven years will be very hard. After that it will not become easier, but you will get used to it". Monsignor Moioli, representing the Oriental Congregation, speaking in Italian, stressed the importance of a Belarusian bishop representing his country at the forthcoming Ecumenical Council.

On the following day Bishop Sipovich celebrated the Liturgy in the church of Maria von gutem Rat (Mary of Good Counsel), which had been assigned to the Belarusians for the duration of the Eucharistic Congress. Everyone was deeply impressed by his sermon, in which he spoke about how he saw his role as a bishop and a Belarusian. Unfortunately there is no record of its contents. Here is what the Bishop himself wrote in his diary: "I preached about Christ and the Holy Eucharist,

---

[38] "Joannes Episcopus Servus Servorum Dei dilecto filio Ceslao Sipovich... salutem et apostolicam benedictionem. Quandoquidem Sacrum Consilium, negotiis Ecclesiae Orientalis praepositum, opportunum censuit ut iis fidelibus albo-ruthhenis ritus byzantini, qui extra patriam quacumque de cause degunt, consuleretur, id Nos libenti animo accipientes... Te, dilecte fili, quem egregiae animi ingeniique virtutes et spectata in Deum pietas probe commendant, aptum esse aestimavimus cui huiusmodi officium daretur. Quo autem fructuosius his munus fungi possis... quae apostolica pollemus potestate Te Episcopum nominamus sedis titulo Mariamitano..."

about the mission of a bishop, a Belarusian bishop. Afterwards I was told that my sermon should be considered as an inspired programme. They were asking for the text, but I had none. I had it in my head". It is a pity that in 1960 tape recorders were still a rarity...

On Saturday 6 August, as part of the programme of the Eucharistic Congress, in the presence of the Patriarch of Antioch Maximos IV, a concelebrated Byzantine liturgy took place at the Congress's main altar at the Theresienwiese. Eleven bishops took part in the Liturgy. The chief celebrant was the Ukrainian Metropolitan Maxim Hermaniuk, Archbishop of Winnipeg in Canada. In writing about this liturgy in his diary, Bishop Sipovich recorded the following interetsing incident: "There were two deacons: a Ukrainian and (a deacon) from Chevetogne. Three choirs sang: Ukrainian, the so-called Russian, and Greek. The one 'Russian' deacon (i.e. from Chevetogne – *A.N.*) prayed only 'for the suffering Russian brothers'. For this he was rebuked by me and His Exc. Bukatko. After the Liturgy he apologised to His Exc. Hermaniuk and asked to be given a penance; I told him to say a prayer for the Ukrainian and Belarusian peoples. When I later told this incident to Monsignor Moioli, he remarked about this deacon: 'Che stupido!' (how stupid)".

The Eucharistic Congress over, Bishop Sipovich returned to Rome on 11 August. There were many matters to settle. One of the most important was the audience with the Holy Father who was then in his summer residence at Castel Gondolfo. This was fixed for Saturday 20 August at 12.15 p.m. Bishop Sipovich left the following description in his diary: " At 12.08 the Holy Father received me with the words 'Venga, venga! (Come in, come in!)'. We came to the table. He sat, and I sat by the side of the table. He asked me who I was, where from and who consecrated me. I answered that I was a Belarusian, from Belarus, and that I was the (first) bishop after many years of us being orphaned of the hierarchy... When I told him, that I was consecrated in Munich, he asked who was the consecrator. 'His Exc. Buchko' – I answered. 'O, quello mio piccolo amico! (O, that little friend of mine!)', the Pope said with a smile. Then he started to speak in Latin and said that one should always: 1. choose the lowest place (then he laughed again and, pointing at himself, said in Italian: 'Ma vedi loro mi hanno messo qui!' [But look, they have put me here!]); 2. to be the servant of all; 3. to preserve priestly integrity and purity (integritatem et puritatem sacerdotalem); 4. to respond to the call of grace. Having enumerated those four points he added: 'Sub juramento propositionem uti sacerdos feci haec quatuor puncta observare (Under the oath I made a resolution as a priest to observe those four points)'... I asked his blessing for my mother, for my family and relations, for all Belarusians in Belarus and abroad, for all Marians. The Holy Father answered: 'Di tutto il cuore! (From all my heart!)'. Then he himself asked me: 'Vuoi che facciamo insieme la fotografia?' (Would you like a photo of us together?) – 'Si, Santità!' (Yes, Your Holiness!)... I forgot to add that when I talked with the Holy Father and said that I was working among Belarusians in England, he said: 'I am now learning the English language, but it is exteremely difficult... è troppo difficile!'". Bishop Sipovich summed up his impressions of the Pope: "The audience went as Mgr Moioli foretold. Spontaneous fatherly questions. One feels at once the goodness and simplicity of this man. Even if he speaks about principles, he enunciates them forcefully, but at the same time simply, in a fatherly manner".

It was not till October that Bishop Sipovich was able to come back to London which he had left as a priest on 6 July. On Sunday 30 October there was solemn

Pontifical Liturgy. The small chapel of SS Peter and Paul at Marian House was full to capacity with Belarusians and English friends, many of whom had to remain outside. Luckily the weather was exceptionally good for that time of the year. As Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "One can feel that God helps us even in such small matters". Next Sunday, 6 November, was a "family" celebration for Belarusians alone, with the Pontifical Liturgy in the morning in the chapel of SS Peter and Paul, and a reception in the afternoon in honour of Bishop Sipovich at the headquarters of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain. During the reception Bishop received as a present the book by Prat, "The Theology of Saint Paul" and was made an honorary member of the Association.

On 9 November Bishop Sipovich was back in Rome.

On 9 March 1838 Josaphat Bulhak, the last Metropolitan of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church, died in St Petersburg. He was 80 years old, ill and broken in spirit. During the last ten years of his life he had had to look on helplessly as some of his bishops, under the leadership of Joseph Siemashko and with the full support of the Russian authorities, undermined his Church from within, destroying it slowly in order to bring about its "union" with the Russian Orthodox Church. The Metropolitan alone stood in their way. He died a Catholic, yet his adversaries did not hesitate to use him even after his death by burying him in the Orthodox church. One year later on 25 March 1839 the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus ceased to exist... With the Belarusian national revival various attempts were made to restore the Greek Catholic Church too, all of them to no avail owing to unfavourable political and other circumstances, the attitude of the Catholic Church authorities being not the least of them. The episcopal consecration of Ceslaus Sipovich marked a radical change of attitude of those authorities towards Belarusians. Thus after more than 120 years the Belarusian Greek Catholics had once again their own bishop, raising their hopes of the restoration of their Church.

## 13. The Whole World His Parish

On Wednesday 13 November 1960 there was a Pontifical Divine Liturgy at St Peter's Basilica in the presence of the Holy Father to mark the feast of St John Chrysostom (according to the Gregorian calendar) and the begining of the work of the Preparatory Commission for the Eastern Churches for the forthcoming General Council. The first meeting of the Commission took place on Thursday 14 November. On 15 November Bishop Sipovich was elected head of its Section for Union. During the year that followed various aspects of the relations between Catholic Eastern Churches and those not in communion with the Holy See were considered, with the view of achieving the union of all in One Holy Church of Christ. The subject studied were: The obstacles encountered in the work for Union; Methods employed in Union work; The Rites in the Church; The place of Patriarchs; Doctrinal characteristics of various Eastern Christian Churches not in Union with the Holy See etc. The conclusions were to be later presented for the consideration of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Council who would then publish relevant decrees.

As time went on Bishop Sipovich became more and more involved in the preparatary work for the Council. Apart from his own, he took active part in the work of the Pastoral section. In 1962, when the Council was already in session, he was appointed member of the Commission for the Religious (i.e. monastic foundations).

Important as the preparatory work for the Council was, Bishop Sipovich never forgot that he was a Belarusian bishop for Belarusians. This was incidentally stated in a recommendatory letter of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches in which he was described as "Most Excellent Lord Father D. Ceslaus Sipovich, Titular Bishop of Mariamme, to whom was entrusted direction of the apostolate among the Belarusian faithful of Byzantine rite who reside outside their native country"[39]. The letter, signed by Cardinal Cicognani and Father Coussa, was dated 29 July 1960, i.e. one week before Father Sipovich's episcopal consecration.

Evidently the expression "direction of the apostolate" was too vague, and Bishop Sipovich asked the Oriental Congregation to give him more detailed instruction with regard to his powers and duties. On 25 November 1960 he received an answer from the Congregation, which set out the following points:

"1. Your Excellency must visit your exiled countrymen annually, then report back to the Sacred Congregation with suggestions as to what is to be done to improve their spiritual and temporal situation;

2. During such visits Your Excelency will celebrate all offices, public and private, which you may be asked to perform, or feels to be necessary, making also timely exhortations and instructions;

3. With regard to acts requiring jurisdiction in the strict sense (establishing of parishes, opening of seminaries, celebration of marriages, priestly ordinations...) Your Excellency must request the jurisdiction from the local ordinary, or from this Sacred Congregation;

4. Finally Your Excellency will hold yourself at the disposal of this Sacred Congregation for any eventuality".

---

[39] "Exc.mus Dominus Pater D. Ceslaus Sipovich, Episcopus Titularis Mariammitanus, cui commissa est directio apostolatus pro fidelibus albo-ruthenis ritus byzantini extra patriam degentibus".

As can be seen from the above, the real powers of Bishop Sipovich were fairly restricted, in most cases they did not arise from his office but were delegated to him by a local bishop or the Oriental Congregation. Thus much depended on his tact and ability to get on with the church authorities.

The question of Bishop Sipovich's residence was settled in such a way that part of the year he would spend in Rome, and another part in London. The Oriental Congregation would have preferred for him to reside in Rome all the time, but eventually they agreed to the compromise, proposed by Bishop Sipovich who was attached to Marian House. As it proved, the arrangement worked out very well. The Archbishop of Westminster was at that time Cardinal William Godfrey. In 1947, when Sipovich came to England, he was Apostolic delegate to Great Britain. Thus the two men knew each other well, and when Bishop Sipovich paid a visit to Cardinal Godfrey on 21 October 1960, it was a meeting of old friends. There was no need to wait long for the results. When Father Haroshka wrote to the Westminster Curia for permission to resume the publication of the journal *Bozhym shliakham* in London, he received the answer that there was no objection on their part, provided he had the approval of Bishop Sipovich. Another case was the project of a boarding house for Belarusian boys. It so happened that at that time a house at 41 Holden Road, just across the street from Marian House, was up for sale. All the Belarusian priests then in London – Haroshka, Hermanovich and Nadson – were unanimous in suggesting that the house should be bought by the Belarussian Mission with the view of establishing there a boarding house for boys of Belarusian parentage. The boys would attend local English Catholic schools, but would live in the house in a Belarusian atmosphere and learn the language and culture of the country of their origin. Bishop Sipovich liked the idea and presented it to the Westminster Curia and the Oriental Congregation. Westminster had no objections, while the Oriental Congregation, perhaps as a present to Bishop Sipovich on the occasion of his consecration, gave a grant of the princely sum of £10,000 for the purchase. The House was bought early in 1961 and was named "Saint Cyril's House" in honour of the 12th-century Belarusian saint Cyril, Bishop of Turau. There was some confusion about the name in the correspondence with the Oriental Congregation which for some unknown reason insisted on calling the newly acquired property "Marian House"...

After his consecration Bishop Sipovich could no longer remain rector of the Belarusian Catholic Mission in London. This was made clear to him by Father Coussa on 6 October 1960. With the consent of the Oriental Congregation Father Haroshka was appointed in his place.

There remained also the question of Bishop Sipovich's title. On 16 September 1960 Bishop Sloskans wrote to the Oriental Congregation, asking to be relieved from the office of Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians on the grounds that Belarusians now had their own bishop. But the Oriental Congregation was not in a hurry to appoint a successor. As late as 25 October 1961 the new head of the Oriental Congregation, Archbishop Coussa (he had become an archbishop in February that year), who was a great authority on canon law, explained to Bishop Sipovich that if he resided in Rome permanently, it would be easier to give him the Visitor's title. In fact among Bishop Sipovich's papers there is no document of his appointment as Apostolic Visitor. For the first time he was called so in the document of the Vatican Secretariat of State of 9 November 1963, appointing him Consultant of the Oriental Congregation. But by then Bishop Sipovich was already Superior General of Marian Fathers and as such permanently resident in Rome. In the official publication of the Oriental Congregation, "Oriente Cattolico" (Vatican 1974, p.180), Bishop Sipovich is described as "Visitatore delegato della Sacra Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali

per l'assistenza dei fedeli Belorussi all'estero" (Visitor delegate of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches for assistance to the Belarusian faithful abroad). The Romanian Bishop Basil Cristea and the Russian Andrew Katkov are described in a similar manner.

Whatever the "job description", Bishop Sipovich took seriously his obligations to visit Belarusian communities throughout the world as instructed by the Oriental Congregation. This required careful planning so as not to clash with his other duties, such as participation in successive sessions in Rome of the Preparatory Commission for the Ecumenical Council. Thus in 1961 on 14-15 January the Bishop was in Nottingham, where he paid a visit to the Bishop of Nottingham, celebrated the Pontifical Liturgy and met members of the local Belarusian community. On 28-29 January he visited Manchester. On 17 February he was on his way to Rome (by train) to take part in the session of the Preparatory Commision. In March he was in Northern France and Belgium, only to return on 16 April to Rome for another session of the Commission; then back in London to settle the question of the proposed boarding house for boys, the pastoral centre in Nottingham etc. On 2-5 June Bishop took part in a "study weekend" at Spode House, organised by the "Eastern Churches Quarterly Group" on the Ecumenical Council, after which he made a brief visit in Nottingham. On 19 June the Bishop was back in Rome for the session of the Commission, but just a few days later, on 28 June he flew together with Mgr Tatrarynovich via Paris and New York to Chicago for the consecration of the Belarusian Greek Catholic church of Christ the Redeemer. The Belarusian Greek Catholic community in Chicago which was founded in 1955, began to develop rapidly after 1958, when Father Uladzimir Tarasevitch, having completed his studies, came back from Rome, and was put in charge of it in place of his uncle, Father John Chrysostom. On 15 December 1959 a building at 3017 Fullerton Avenue was acquired. It was to become the Belarusian church of Christ the Redeemer, with Father Uladzimir as its first resident pastor. The consecration of the first Belarusian Greek Catholic church in the New World by the first Belarusian Greek Catholic Bishop took place on 2 July in the presence of the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal Albert Meyer and a huge gathering of Belarusians from all over United States and Canada. After Chicago Bishop Sipovich visited Belarusian communities in New York and other American cities. On 1 August he flew from New York via London to Frankfurt and from there by train to Koenigstein for the annual congress "Kirche in Not (The Church in Need)", during which a reunion of Belarusian priests took place. Then back to London, where on 7 September he was visited by his younger brother Peter from Poland, whom he had not seen for 23 years. On 27 September Bishop Sipovich was again in Rome for the session of a Preparatory Commission. After a short visit to Munich on 14-16 October at the invitation of the local Belarusian community to mark the first anniversary of his episcopal consecration in that city, he returned to Rome to report to the Oriental Congregation on the results of his travels. On 1 November he was in London. On 9-10 December he visited the Belarusian community in Birmingham, and on 13-14 January 1962 – in Bradford, thus completing the round of visits of major Belarusian communities in England.

The years that followed had brought new commitments on top of the old ones.

Incidentally, in June 1961, before going to the United States with Bishop Sipovich, Father Tatarynovich became a "Monsignor": on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of his priestly ordination he was named Domestic Prelate of His Holiness. A few months later he was appointed Belarusian representative on the

Pontifical Council for Emigrants. Thus another request of the 1960 Reunion of Belarusian priests was granted.

There were also significant changes in the Oriental Congregation. In September 1960 Mgr Giuseppe Moioli, who was in charge of Belarusian affairs, was appointed Inter-Nunzio to Ethiopia and went there after being consecrated bishop by Pope John XXIII himself. While rejoicing in his elevation, Bishop Sipovich was sad to lose an old and trusted friend who had done much to help Belarusians. In August 1961 Cardinal Cicognani became the Secretary of State, and his place at the Oriental Congregation was taken by Father Acacius Coussa who some six months earlier had been raised to the dignity of an archbishop.

The greatest difficulty in organising pastoral care for Belarusians in different countries was the shortage of priests. Sadly among the few priests that there were, some presented serious problems. One of these was John Sadouski who in 1948 was received into the Church and as a candidate for Marian Congregation by Father Sipovich. In 1949 he went to Rome where, after his novitiate, he began his studies in preparation for priesthood. In 1953 he left the Marian Congregation. Bishop Sloskans admitted him as a cleric of the Diocese of Minsk and found him a place at the French College in Rome. Ordained priest in 1955, Sadouski persuaded Sloskans to let him continue his studies to gain higher qualifications. Five years on, in 1960, and there was no end in sight of Sadouski's thirst for knowledge. Unfortunately there was also no evidence of benefits of his learning to anyone except himself. It seems that Bishop Sloskans who until then supported him, began to have his doubts about him. In autumn 1960 he suggested to Bishop Sipovich that he should order Sadouski to make a month's retreat and then find him a place somewhere in Germany as an assistant priest. Eventually Bishop Sipovich ordered Sadouski to go to London to help in the work of the Belarusian Catholic Mission there. He came in March 1961. It was decided to put him in charge of the boarding house for boys which was to be opened in September. In the meantime Father Hermanovich went to the United States, telling everyone that he was going to New York to see his uncle who was four years younger than he... In reality he went to explore the possibility of establishing there a Belarusian Marian foundation. Father Nadson went to Nottingham where, thanks to his degree in Mathematics, he obtained a post at the diocesan college, teaching three days a week, and having the remaining four for pastoral work among Belarusian communities in Central and Northern England.

Less than two months after the beginning of the school year it was becoming clear that Father Sadouski was a disaster. On 4 November he gave an ultimatum to Bishop Sipovich to find him a place as a chaplain, or he would leave everything and get a job on the London Underground. The Bishop's answer was that he could not reccommend for a chaplaincy a priest who was thinking of abandoning his priesthood. Everything seemed quiet for a while, but on Monday 11 December Sadouski did not appear for Liturgy. Then as Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "About 11 a.m. Father John comes to me, very upset, and puts on my table papers from the Oriental Congregation and Westmnister Curia with the words: 'Here are my papers, I can no longer be a priest'... I try to reason with him... No! Father John remains deaf as a tree trunk. He lowers his eyes and looks down. I ask him what is the main reason for his crisis. 'Obedience is too heavy for me'...". In fact it was not so much obedience as a (not so) young English woman who sang in the Marian House choir. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on that day: "This is a heavy cross for me personally. I accept it, God, as a penance for my sins. Give me strength to carry it with profit for myself and for unhappy John".

The defection of Sadouski necessitated a change of plans. Father Hermanovich was recalled from the United States and put in charge of the boys. Considering his age he needed a younger assistant, so Father Nadson had to resign his post in Nottingham at the end of the summer term 1962 and come back to London. Thus many promising projects had to be abandoned.

Another problem priest was Father Constantine Maskalik. During his three years in Paris (1959-61) he had proved himself completely unfit for a position of responsiblity, and all but destroyed the work which Father Haroshka had built up during the previous twelve years. The members of the Belarusian community asked the Church authorities for Father Maskalik to be removed. This was done in September 1962. Bishop Sipovich found for Father Maskalik a place in Rome, where he was to help Mgr Tatarynovich at Vatican Radio as a reader. Once again Father Haroshka was appointed rector of the Paris Mission, combining as well as he could his new duties with those in London. This meant spending much time shuttling between the two cities. Because of the difficulties with Father Maskalik, it was only in May 1963 that Bishop Sipovich was able to make an official visit to the Belarusian community in France.

Many organisations with which Bishop Sipovich was closely connected as a priest, now wanted to pay homage to him. Among them there were the Central Coordinating Committee of Refugee Welfare Organisation, in which for 12 years he had represented Belarusians; The Newman Association; and the Society of St John Chrysostom. The latter was particularily close to his heart, both because of its aims and because he had played the key role in its revival in 1959. On becoming Bishop he was made an honorary Vice-President of the Society and took a keen interest in its activities. It was in connection with this Society that on 2 July 1962 he and Mgr John Barton paid a visit to Cardinal Godfrey who as Archbishop of Westminster was ex-officio honorary President of the Society. Among the problems discussed was whether the Society of St John Chrysostom could invite non-Catholic speakers. The cardinal was obviously not happy with this idea and tried to avoid giving a direct answer, but eventually agreed when he was assured by Bishop Sipovich that he would be informed beforehand in each particular case. When Bishop Sipovich asked him if he should accept invitations to speak from the Anglicans, the Cardinal wanted to know whether the meetings would take place in a church or in a hall. Sipovich made a note in his diary: "The Cardinal was a little nervous, uncertain of himself. He seemed to be afraid of something, but of what I don't know". Obviously ecumenism was a new concept for many Catholics at that time, and was regarded by them with suspicion.

Another example, illustrating the attitude of Cardinal Godfrey in the question of relations with non Catholics is the following. On 24 July 1962 Bishop Sipovich made a request to the Oriental Congregation for permission to hear confessions and admit to the Sacraments the Orthodox boys of St Cyril's House in London, as well as their parents, should they so desire. His request was forwarded to the Congregation of the Holy Office. On 8 November he received a letter, dated 5 November, from the Oriental Congregation, informing him that the Holy Office "having considered all the circumstances and after having consulted the local ordinary does not think it opportune to grant the requested faculty"[40]. In other words the request was refused. The local Ordinary in question was none other than Cardinal Godfrey. Bishop Sipovich's comment in his diary was "What a pity".

---

40 "Considerato tutte le circostanze e dopo aver consultato l'Ordinario del luogo, non ritiene opportuno concedere la facolta richiesta".

Early in 1965 Bishop Sipovich, who was then Superior General of the Marian Fathers, renewed the same request, not personally but through the Procurator General of the Marian Congregation, Fr Joseph Vaishnora, a Lithuanian, who wrote directly to the Holy Office. On 7 April there came a reply, signed by Cardinal Ottaviani, stating that "The Holy Office has nothing against the said (i.e. Orthodox – *A.N.*) students being admitted to the Sacraments, this being in accordance with the Decree 'On the Eastern Churches' of the Vatican II Ecumenical Council". This was one of the examples of astonishing change of attitude brought about by the Ecumenical Council in a short time.

Among various groups which wanted to honour Bishop Sipovich there was also the Polish community in London. A reception in his honour was proposed by the "Alma Mater Vilnensis", the association of former students and teachers of the Vilna University. It was supported by other organisations. One of them was the so-called "Association of the Eastern Territories (Zwi≤zek ziem wschodnich)", according to which Western Belarus and Ukraine, which before 1939 had been under Polish rule, were nothing more than Eastern provinces of Poland. It was obviously a political ploy to make Bishop Sipovich appear to support Polish claims to Belarusian territories. He told the organisers that he would have to decline their invitation if the Association of the Eastern Territories had anything to do with it.

Incidentally Ludwik Bocianski, the former Polish governor (wojewoda) of Vilna province, who in 1938 expelled the Belarusian Marian priests and students from Druia, was now living in London. Bishop Sipovich wanted to meet him in order to ask certain details of this incident. However, Bocianski told the person who acted as the intermediary: "I have not the courage to meet Bishop Sipovich". He died on 7 February 1970. Bishop Sipovich made the following entry in his diary: "Now he is already before the just judgment seat of God. I wish him eternal peace in heaven, but the sad history connected with him remains and no one can change it".

On 3-7 August 1962 there was a World pilgrimage to Rome of emigrés and exiles of various nationalities to mark the tenth anniversary of the Papal Encyclical "Exul Familia (The Family of exiles). Among the participants there was also a group of Belarusians who came from England, France and Germany. The highlights of the pilgrimage were the Way of the Cross at the Coliseum on Saturday 4 August. The meditation at the first station was conducted in Belarusian by Mgr Peter Tatarynovich. On the following day, which was Sunday, there was a Mass at St Peter's in the presence of the Holy Father, who received gifts from the various national groups. On behalf of the Belarusians the two senior members of their group, Daminik Aniska and Maria Bierbash, gave the Holy Father a Book of Gospels in Belarusian translation. On Monday there was Pontifical Mass at St Paul's Basilica, during which various national groups sang in their languages. Belarusians sang their religious anthem "Mahutny Bozha (O, God Almighty)". Apart from the official functions each national group had its own particular programme. For the Belarusian group under the leadership of Bishop Sipovich the pilgrimage was a great success, not least thanks to the efforts of Mgr Peter Tatarynovich who was responsible for its organisational side.

The Belarusian priests present at the pilgrimage took this opportunity to hold their annual reunion. The generally happy atmosphere prevailing during the whole pilgrimage was marred by the sad news of the death on 29 July of Cardinal Acacius Coussa, the first Oriental Catholic to become head of the Oriental Congregation. He had been made cardinal only four months earlier, on 19 March. In his person Bishop

Sipovich and Belarusians lost another good and trusted friend who understood their problems. His successor was Cardinal Gustavo Testa. Bishop Sipovich left the following account of his visit to the Oriental Congregation on 8 August: " The new secretary, Cardinal Testa, is not in Rome. The assessor (i.e. the second-in-command – *A.N.*) says that he knows the East, knows the languages... As if he was defending himself from persistent thought: 'How shall we manage now?'... Everyone repeats that Cardinal Coussa 'Vi voleva bene (wished you well)'. It seems to me that even now in heaven with his usual smile he is helping us".

On 24-28 August the Superior general of the Marian Congregation, Fr Stanislaus Skutans, a Latvian, made ae canonical visit of Marian House. It was the first canonical visit since the Marian House became the autonomous religious house of Belarusian Marian Fathers of the Byzantine rite. In Marian documents it was called "Domus Londinensis II (London House II)", while the Lithuanian house and the church of St Casimir at Oval, Hackney was "Domus Londinensis I". The official division of Marian Fathers in London into two separate houses took place in June 1962.

There are a few interesting points in the report of the Superior General's visit. First of all he enumerates the personnel of the house, which according to him were: 1. Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich, in charge of the apostalate among the Belarusian faithful of Byzantine rite outside their own country, resident at Marian House; 2. Father Leo Haroshka, superior and bursar, as well as rector of the Mission (presumably Belarusian Catholic Mission – *A.N.*); 2. Joseph Hermanovich, councillor, secretary and spiritual director, and housemaster of St Cyril's house for boys; 3. Brother Stanislaus Bahovich, sacristan and cook. Then he continues: "Apart from our members there is Rev. Fr Nadson Alexander, aged about 36, attached to the Belarusian Mission (ad Missionem Alboruthenam addictus), deputy (vicarius) of the rector of the Mission and of the housemaster of the boarding house...". With regard to St Cyril's House the Superior General has this to say: "the house, which is at 41 Holden Road is the property of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches and has been given for the use of Belarusian Marians (Convictus et Domus, quae ad viam Holden Road 41 invenitur proprietatemque S. Congregationis Pro Ecclesia Orientali constituit et ad usum Marianorum Alboruthenorum concessa est)". It was not known what was discussed between Fr Skutans and the Belarusian Marians during his visit. The next canonical visit was on 18-27 March 1965 by the new Superior General who was Bishop Sipovich himself. In his report of this visit there is an interesting passage: "The remark of my predecessor Rev. Fr S. Skutans during the time of his canonical visit, namely that 'it seems to be more opportune, if the Marians themselves assumed the direction of the boarding house in their own hands not only in name, but in fact', is still to come. Most certainly for the development and growth of this House other Marian workers are needed"[41].

The passage quoted by Bishop Sipovich is not found in Skutans's report. However, there seems to be no doubt that the future of St Cyril's House, and who should be in charge of it, was the subject of discussion during his canonical visit. Perhaps it was as well that Fr Nadson, who, according to Skutans, was "attached" to the Mission, knew nothing about it: most probably he would have refused to remain

---

41 "Illud a meo predecessore Rev.mo P. S. Skutans tempore suae visitationis canonicae notatum, scilicet: 'Magis opportunum videtur esse, ut ipsi Mariani in propriis manibus moderationem Convictus non solum in nomine, verum etiam de facto assummerent', adhuc veniet. Certo certius ad Domum istam evolvendam augendamque necessarii sunt alii operarii Mariani".

in London. As it is, he is still there in the year 2003, while there is no trace of the Marian Fathers, Belarusian or others...

On 11 October 1962 the long-awaited opening of the Second Vatican Council took place. The next three years, during which the Council was in session, were without any doubt the most important religious event of the 20th century. It had far reaching effects on all aspects of religious life not only of the Catholic Church, but also of many Christians not in communion with her. Among over 2000 Fathers of the Council there was also Bishop Sipovich. He left the following description of the opening ceremony: "When the wave of bishops was moving through St Peter's Square, there was a feeling in people's hearts that this was an unusual moment. The bishops were walking six abreast. I was walking for some time with an Ethiopian and Chinese bishops, and with Polish Bishop Pawlowski, my professor from Vilna... I wanted to pray, but it was difficult. My thoughts got distracted and then concentrated on the mystery we were then experiencing: 'Where there are two or three of you gathered in my name, I am also with them'... We entered the basilica and took the places reserved for the bishops (without any regard for rank or age)... I was looking at the Holy Father, when he was walking: calm, concentrated, barely acknowledging the applause. The Basilica looked like hanging terraces with large white lilies (the bishops' mitres) growing on them... In the evening we watched the same ceremonies on television... Only a few hours have passed and the great unrepeatable moments already belong to history".

Bishop Sipovich was present at all sessions of the Council and meetings of the commissions to which he belonged. His diary of that period contains detailed accounts of discussions and meetings with various persons, as well as his personal impressions.

The first session of the Council ended on 8 December. Soon afterwards Bishop Sipovich left Rome for Munich, where on 11 December the Belarusian community held a small celebration in honour of Father U. Salaviej on the occasion of his receiving the title of Mitred Archpriest.

The year 1963 was full of events. On 22 January Cardinal Godfrey, Archbishop of Westminster died. He was conservative in his views and cautious by nature, but behind his reserved exterior there was a man of great goodness and understanding. Bishop Sipovich disagreed with him on many points, but was always grateful for the help and good advice he received when in 1947 he arrived in London as a young priest. Among those present at the funeral of Cardinal Godfrey on 29 January there were also Anglican bishops – a sure sign of the changing times. In this connection an amusing incident happened. Someone pointed out to Bishop Sipovich Mgr J. G. Vance and said that he was an Anglican bishop. The Bishop wrote in his diary: "I ask him where is he Anglican Bishop. Outraged, he asks me how old I am. I say: 48. Then he says: I was Catholic before you were born!".

On 10 February the London Sunday paper *The Observer* carried the sensational news, later confirmed by other papers, of the release of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Matropolitan Archbishop of L'viv Joseph Slipyi, who was now resting "somewhere in Italy". Slipyi had become Archbishop of L'viv after the death in 1944 of Andrew Sheptycky. In April 1945 he was arrested by the Communists and spent 18 years in Soviet prisons and labour camps. His release and arrival in Italy started all sorts of speculations about a possible change of attitude of the Soviet Communist authorities towards the Church, in particular towards the Ukrainian Greek

Catholic Church which in 1946 had been suppressed and forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church. Of course, nothing of this kind happened, and the harassment and persecution of the Greek Catholics (with the tacit approval of the Russian Orthodox Church) was if anything, stepped up. On 6 March Archbishop Ivan Buchko told Bishop Sipovich that the Soviet authorities had tried to use the release of Slipyi to establish some kind of contact with the Vatican.

On 21 February Bishop Sipovich had an audience with Metropolitan Slipyi who was living then at the monastery of Grottaferrata near Rome. Among other things Slipyi told him that after the arrest and death of Fr Niemantsevich, since nothing was heard about Fathers Anoshka and Haroshka, Metropolitan Sheptytsky had appointed Father Velichkovsky, a Redemptorist of Byzantine rite, administrator of the Belarusian Exarchate. He could not say whether Vielichkovsky was a bishop.

Soon after his visit to Slipyi Bishop Sipovich had his first audience with the new head of the Oriental Congregation, Cardinal Testa, about which he wrote on 6 March: "My impression from the first visit to Cardinal Testa is very negative: he does not know our problems and shows no interest in them". Archbishop Buchko had the same opinion about the Cardinal and was particularly unhappy about his attitude towards his subordinates. He suggested that Bishop Sipovich should stay in Rome till 1 April to wait for the arrival of Archbishop Moioli in order to tell him about what was happening at the Oriental Congregation, and he would refer it to the Holy Father. But Bishop Sipovich declined to take this advice.

Easter, which that year fell on 14 April, Bishop Sipovich spent in London. On 24-28 April he was in Manchester, where he received into the Catholic Church the family of an Orthodox priest. In the meantime Father Haroshka, who was again in charge of the pastoral work among Belarusians in France, was preparing the long overdue official episcopal visit in Paris. It took place on 24-29 May and was a great success. The highlight of the visit was the Pontifical liturgy on Sunday 26 May with a great gathering of the faithful. Among the Belarusians there was the Bishop's school friend from Druia, Victor Zhauniarovich, who was becoming well known as a painter.

Bishop Sipovich and Father Haroshka returned to London on 30 May 1963, when the world was worried about Pope John XXIII who was terminally ill. On Whit Sunday 2 June, after the Pontifical Liturgy there came a telegram from the Vatican with the Papal blessing for Father Hermanovich on the occasion of his golden priesthood jubilee. It must have been one of the last acts of the Holy Father who died on the following day, Whit Monday 3 June.

Thus ended the pontificate of the Good Pope John, which left an indelible mark on the whole Church. One may wonder how it was possible for one man who was not young to achieve so much and in such a short time. The answer must necessarily be "What is impossible for men, is possible with God". And there is no doubt whatsoever that Pope John XXIII was a man of God.

On 19 June 1963 the cardinals gathered in the Vatican for the Conclave. Two days later, on 21 June, the white smoke over the Sixtine Chapel indicated to the whole world that the Church had a new Pope. He was Cardinal Giovanni Battista Montini, archbishop of Milan, who took the name of Paul VI.

In the meantime there were also changes in the air in the Marian Congregation, as they prepared for the General Chapter and election of new Superior General for the next six years. There were various conjectures about who he would be. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on 13 June: "I spoke with Fathers Sielski and Jasinski (both Poles – *A.N.*) about the Marian Chapter... Father Jasinski wants the

next Superior General to be either a Latvian or a Belarusian, because neither Lithuanians nor Poles would be impartial".

On Monday 1 July there was a telephone call from Father Skutans telling Bishop Sipovich that the General Chapter had elected him Superior General of Marian Fathers and asking him whether he would accept the post. It was lunchtime, and Bishop Sipovich told the news to Fathers Hermanovich and Nadson (Father Haroshka was in Rome at the Chapter). Father Nadson strongly objected on the grounds that as the first and only Belarusian bishop, Sipovich's first duty should be towards Belarusians. However, the Bishop's loyalty towards the Marian Congregation prevailed, and he accepted the nomination, provided the Congregations for the Eastern Churches and for the Religious gave their consent. The necessary consent was obtained with the proviso that, since the Oriental Congregation wanted Bishop Sipovich to remain Visitor for Belarusians, it was essential for him to have a good Vicar General (Deputy) who could be in charge of the Marian Congregation during his absences. It was thus that on Thursday 4 July Bishop Sipovich landed in Rome and was greeted at the airport by a delegation of Marian Fathers. Before their house the remaining fathers were waiting and, as Sipovich wrote in his diary, "greeted me without great enthusiasm but sincerely".

## 14. "All Things to all Men"

A Bishop is the successor of the Holy Apostles, and as such, governs the part of the Church of Christ entrusted to his care. He must be father and pastor to all his flock without distinction. If he is drawn from a monastic community or a religious congregation, he remains a member of it, but is automatically exempt from all duties within it and cannot occupy any position of responsibility in it except in very rare cases and by special permission of the higher Church authorities. Long-established and venerable monastic and religious foundations such as the Benedictines, Franciscans, Jesuits etc. gave to the Church many great and holy bishops, but never had a bishop as their superior. The Marian Congregation is a notable exception: during the sixty years 1909-1969, out of six superiors general three of them were bishops. This must surely qualify them for an entry in the Guinness Book of Records.

After the arrival of Bishop Sipovich the Marian General Chapter continued its work for some time. On Friday 12 July 1963 the members of the Chapter were received in audience by Pope Paul VI. Bishop Sipovich noted in his diary that the Holy Father greeted them in Polish: "Niech b≥dzie pochwalony Jezus Chrystus" (May Jesus Christ be praised). No doubt he intended to please them and did not realise that the majority of those present were not Poles.

Thus began six difficult years in the life of Bishop Sipovich. In addition to participating in the General Council and its commissions, he had now to deal with Marian affairs on an almost daily basis, leaving little time for the Belarusians. This was felt on his first visit to London after his election. He arrived on 12 August, and during the month that followed much of his time was spent in sorting out various complicated personal problems of Polish Marians at Lower Bullingham (near Hereford) and Fawley Court (near Henley-on-Thames), and the financial difficulties of the Lithuanian house in London. On 21 August there was also a meeting of the Belarusian Marian Fathers under the Bishop's chairmanship. Among the subjects discussed were pastoral work among Belarusians, the resumption of publication of the journal *Bozhym shliakham*, and St Cyril's boarding House for boys. Although all these activities concerned the Belarusian Catholic Mission, Father Nadson, not being a Marian, was not present when they were discussed.

On 22 September Bishop Sipovich was back in Rome. The Second Session of the Vatican General Council opened on 29 September and lasted till 4 December. Bishop Sipovich attended all its meetings, as well as those of the Commission for the Religious, of which he was a member. It was during this session that he made the acquaintance of the two representatives of the Russian Moscow Orthodox Patriarchate, Archpriest Vitali Baravy (Borovoi) and Father Ilich. It proved that both these "Russian" priests were... Belarusians.

The Council began each working day with Mass (Liturgy), celebrated by one of the participating bishops, and the enthronment of the Book of Gospels. On Saturday 14 October it was the turn of Bishop Sipovich to bring in the Gospel. He did this accompanied by Fathers Uladzimir Salaviej and Constantine Maskalik. Bishop wrote in his diary on that day: "Today I had the great honour at the start of the session of the Council to make the entrance with the Holy Gospel... It is dificult to describe the impression. The Holy Gospel is the living word of the Lord Christ and symbolises Christ. We are children of the glorious and longsuffering Belarusian nation, but God in his mercy does not forget about us. Today we have the honour to testify that we are alive and are taking part in the greatest event of our times, the Ecumenical Council. Yesterday I found in one of our Marian depositories a beautiful pectoral cross which

had belonged to Father Abrantovich. It is dear to me for many reasons, but the strange thing is that I have found it only now, and today I wore it for the first time during the Council. If without the will of God even a hair cannot fall from one’s head, then the cross also could not be found without His will".

With so many things happening in the world and among Belarusians one thing was missing, namely a good Belarusian Catholic periodical publication. There was Mgr Tatarynovich’s *Znic*, but, although it contained many excellent things, it reflected too much the individualistic character of its editor. What was needed was the resumption of *Bozhym shliakham* which, under the editorship of Fr Haroshka, had earned the well deserved reputation of one of the best Belarusian religious publications on account of its contents and presentation. Unfortunately Father Haroshka, although he spoke about it quite often, seemed undecided, as if uncertain of his own strength. It was in these circumstances that Fathers Hermanovich and Nadson resolved to resume publication "under new management". When the idea was put to Father Haroshka, he agreed readily. The journal was to be bimonthly, with Father Hermanovich as its new editor and Fr Nadson his assistant. Bishop Sipovich approved the plan, and early in 1964 the first issue of the relaunched *Bozhym shliakham* appeared. Among other things it contained the Christmas message of Bishop Sipovich and his account of the Second Session of the Vatican Council.

Father Hermanovich, despite his age (he was 74), proved to be a very good editor, with an ability to attract new and interesting collaborators. The level of the journal remained as high as ever, but there was more variety. But first and foremost it became an unofficial organ of Bishop Sipovich in his capacity as Visitor for Belarusians; his pastoral letters, sermons or correspondences appeared in practically every issue. Apart from that there were sermons and articles of a religious nature from Fathers Hermanovich, Nadson, and, later, Zhurnia and Padziava; articles of historical and cultural interest, such as the pioneering work on the history of Belarusian Church Music by H. Pichura, or early Belarusian prayer books (16-17th centuries) by A. Nadson; Father Hermanovich’s reminiscences of Belarusian priests, his friends, whom he had known during his long life; and of course his poetry which added a lighter touch to the journal. Letters to the editor, reflecting the life of Belarusian communities in different countries and continents were an essential feature of the journal.

In 1964 Bishop Sipovich accepted Robert Tamushanski as a candidate for priesthood. He was a third-generation American, brought up by his grandparents who had come from Belarus at the turn of the 19th/20th centuries. They were Greek Catholics and spoke Belarusian, although, being without any formal education, they could not explain to their grandson who they were. From them Robert learnt the Belarusian language. In search of his identity he joined the Ukrainian Basilian Fathers, but felt that it was not exactly what he was looking for. By chance Father Francis Charniauski met him and put him in touch with Bishop Sipovich who found him a place in the seminary at Koenigstein near Frankfurt. He began his theological studies there in the spring semester 1964. Thus ended Robert Tamushanski’s search for his roots.

In the summer 1964 the house next to St Cyril’s House came up for sale. Bishop Sipovich decided to buy it, primarily to expand the boarding house for boys. On 2 September he made the following entry in his diary: "Today is a ‘historical’ day

for the St Cyril of Turau House school: we agreed with Mr Lamb about the purchase of his house at 39 Holden Road. N.12. He asked £12,000, but we agreed on £10,000".

The house was purchased early in 1965 with the help of a loan from the Westminster Diocese.

On 13 September 1964 Bishop Sipovich was back in Rome for the Third Session of the General Council, which started on the following day. It was during this session that on 19 October Bishop Sipovich made a speech at the Council when the draft of a decree on the Eastern churches came up for discussion. He spoke on the role of the Catholic Eastern Churches in the work of the Unity of all Christians. Towards the end he said: "Finally we shall say a few words about the importance of the Eastern Churches in the work for unity. These churches, decimated by persecutions, are accused of some kind of proselytism. These accusations can be even heard from certain Catholics who, in their search for the ways of reunion, despise the past. Today all of us here, guided by the Holy Spirit, are searching for what is best; and we, Eastern Catholics are convinced that our participation in the work for the union of Christians is of decisive importance".

This was Bishop Sipovich's answer to certain Western Catholic "ecumenists" who considered the Eastern Catholics an obstacle in relations with the Eastern Churches not in communion with Rome. He was later congratulated by some members of the Council, in particular Bishop Iakinthos Gad from Athens and Bishop Patrick Dwyer from Leeds.

On 11 October 1963 Metropolitan Joseph Slipyi spoke for the first time at the Council, and asked for the ancient See of Kiev to be raised to the dignity of a Patriarchate. At that time the Council was discussing the draft of the decree on Bishops. Bishop Constantini answered Slipyi that since primates, cardinals, patriarchs etc were not of Divine institution, there was no need to talk about them while dogmatic matters were being discussed.

That was probably the first, but by nomeans the last, public mention of the issue of a Ukrainan Patriarchate. There were even attempts to involve the Belarusians in it. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on 29 October 1964: "Yesterday... at St Peter's I met Mgr P. Tatarynovich who has received permission to be present at (the Council's – *A.N.*) general sessions. We talked about the Kiev Patriarchate. Bishop Sapelak (Ukrainian bishop from Argentina – *A.N.*) told me that His Exc. Metropolitan Slipyi wishes to send a petition to Pope Paul VI in the matter of the Kiev Patriarchate. He asked me whether I would be willing to sign a petition of this sort on behalf of the Belarusian clergy. It is a very weighty matter and I must consult the Belarusian priests. Mgr Tatarynovich is of the opinion that Belarusians should not sign such a petition".

A few weeks later, on 11 November 1964 there is another entry in the diary on the same subject: "Yesterday His Exc. Sapelak gave me a letter to the Holy Father Paul VI to read; it was signed by many Ukrainian bishops and concerned the establishment of the Kiev-Halych Patriarchate... Having considered everything, I shall not sign it for the following reasons: 1. the letter to the Pope does not take into account Belarus and her church organisation at all. Belarus has also a right to a Patriarchate. 2. Why should the Kiev-Halich Patriarchate extend over the Ukrainian churches in the United States, Canada etc. I don't understand why the Patriarch should have jurisdiction outside the borders of a certain territory. 3. Today, when there is not even one bishop in Ukraine, to establish a Patriarchate seems to me, if not naive, at least very odd. 4. What is unrealistic, should not be asked for. 5. In the letter

to the Pope there is an explanation of the words of Urban VIII: ‘Per vos, Rutheni, convertendum esse Orientem (Through you, Ruthenians, the East is to be converted)’. The word ‘Rutheni’ is followed in brackets by ‘Ukrainians’. This is incorrect. Belarusians are mentioned elsewhere, but only as if in passing".

During the third Session of the Council the decree on liturgical languages was approved, allowing the use of vernacular languages in Divine worship. The decree concerned the Catholics of Roman rite, for whom hitherto the use of Latin was compulsory. It was received with enthusiasm by some, cautiously by others, but after some time it was accepted by all. The effect of the decree on languages was also felt in Belarus, but in a strange way. While other people had the Liturgy translated into their native languages, the few Catholic priests who still remained in Belarus hastily introduced... Polish. Perhaps unintentionally they played into the hands of the Communists who in their antireligious propaganda could argue that the Catholic Church was Polish and therefore foreign for Belarusians. Of course there were exceptions. One of them was Father Uladyslau Charniauski, a Marian who had attended the grammar school in Druia, but after 1939 did his theological studies in Lithuania and thus escaped Polish influence. In his parish at Vishnieva he conducted his pastoral work, preached and spoke with his parishioners in Belarusian. From 1965 he began gradually replacing Latin by Belarusian in the Mass, administration of Sacraments etc. On 5 October of that year Bishop Sipovich "received Belarusian texts from the Ritual, which were prepared in the BSSR by Fr. U. Ch(arniauski). They are the texts for baptism and matrimony... They will be printed (as an appendix – *A.N.*) in the Lithuanian Ritual". This episode is interesting because it shows the cooperation between Fr Charniauski and the Lithuanian Catholics. On the other hand in Belarus he was ostracised by Polish and polonised priests who accused him of... helping the Communists to destroy the Church. It is from the Lithuanian bishops who had come to the Council that Bishop Sipovich had first heard about Father Charniauski. Later direct contact was established between the two men. Although Church affairs, and particularly those of Roman rite, in Belarus were not within the competence of Bishop Sipovich, as a priest and a Belarusian he felt obliged to help his countrymen in need. With this in mind on 18 November 1964 he approached archbishop Samoré from the Vatican Secretariate of State, arguing that the only way to improve the religious situation in Belarus would be to appoint an Apostolic Administrator (preferably a bishop) who would be a Belarusian. As a candidate he proposed Father Charniauski.

The language problem in the Christian East differed from that in the West. Theoretically among Eastern Christians, whether Orhodox or Catholic, all languages were permitted in the Liturgy. In practice among the Slavs, the Eastern Churches stuck to the venerable Church Slavonic language although nowadays the faithful could not understand it properly. The Russians have been particularly attached to Church Slavonic. Apart from other considerations, they had sound political reasons for it, namely to preserve the appearance of unity of the Russian Orthodox Church into which millions of Belarusians and Ukrainians had been forcibly incorporated. The first to introduce the native tongue in worship had been the Ukrainian Orthodox Church which after the First World War had proclaimed its independence, despite the strong opposition of the Russians. The Orthodox Church in Poland before the World War II had tried to introduce the Polish language in the Liturgy in an attempt to make "Orthodox Poles" out of Belarusians and Ukrainians.

The language problem in the Church, like everything else in this world, can be used (or abused) for political ends. This does not mean that there are not sound pastoral and spiritual reasons for introducing vernacular languages in the Church, namely that, in the words of St Paul, one "should pray not only with the spirit but with the mind as well" (1 Cor 14:15). Many people had felt like this for a long time. One of them was Fr A. Nadson who, after his return in 1959 from his studies in Rome, set about translating the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom into Belarusian. Early in 1961 he showed his work to Bishop Sipovich and Father Haroshka. Their reaction was discouraging. Father Nadson accepted with due humility their criticisms, but did not give up the work, only kept quiet about it, waiting for more propitious times. For some reason Bishop Sipovich and Father Haroshka did not seem very keen on the Belarusian language in the Liturgy, except for the reading of passages of Scripture. In 1967 Father Haroshka produced a book of Epistle and Gospel readings in Belarusian for Sundays and great feasts. The Belarusian language was partially introduced in the Greek Catholic parish in Chicago about 1960.

The Third Session of the General Council, which concluded its work on 21 November 1964, was of extreme importance, because it was during this session that the decrees "On the Church", "On the Eastern Churches" and, perhaps the most significal of all, "On Ecumenism" were approved. This last decree initiated a new relationship between the Catholic Church and other Christian Churches and communities in search of unity. It was preceded by the pilgrimage of the Pope to the Holy Land on 4-6 January of that year and the historical meeting there between him and the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras. They met in the land where Jesus Christ himself walked nearly two thousand years before.

The session itself was not lacking in dramatic moments. On 13 November, the feast of St John Chrysostom, the Byzantine Pontifical Liturgy which bears the name of that saint was celebrated in Saint Peter's Basilica in the presence of the Holy Father. The chief celebrant was Maximos IV, Patriarch of Antioch, and with him there were several Byzantine rite bishops and priests of different nationalities. Bishop Sipovich was one of them. At the end of the Liturgy the Pope took off his tiara, – or papal triple crown, – carried it to the high altar and placed it there as an offering for the poor of the world. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "I saw some present moved to tears, others applauded. I consider this event as something greater than a symbolic offering to the poor: this is the beginning of the new era in the Church, the era of poverty in the spirit of Christ".

On Sunday 21 March 1965 in London Bishop Sipovich conferred the minor orders of reader and subdeacon on Robert Tamushanski. This was the third Sunday in Lent which in the Byzantine calendar is dedicated to the veneration of the Holy Cross. In itself the conferring of the minor orders is not an important occasion, except for the ordinand himself. However, for the Belarusian Greek Catholic community this event had a special significance. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "(For the first time) since times immemorial a Belarusian bishop in a Belarusian church ordained a Belarusian candidate for priesthood... Per crucem ad lucem! (Through the Cross to Light!). Our nation is passing through sufferings and hardships to a better future. Today we honour the Holy Cross: in order to reign with Christ, we must first learn to suffer".

June 16 1965 marked the 25th anniversary of Bishop Sipovich's priestly ordination. The day fell while he was in the United States where he had gone in his capacity as Superior General of Marian Fathers to make canonical visits to their houses. He arrived on 15 May and left on 28 August for Portugal to visit the community of Marian Fathers in Balsamao. He got back to Rome (via London ) only on 13 September, one day before the beginning of the fourth and last session of the Ecumenical Council. Earlier in the same year, between 17 March and 25 April, Bishop Sipovich had visited the houses of the Marian Fathers in England.

Thus, during five out of the eight months in 1965 before the Council session Bishop Sipovich was busy with Marian affairs, and had little time left for anything else.

In the United States Bishop Sipovich began his canonical vistations of Marian communities with Chicago. He decided on this, because on 23 May the Belarusian Greek Catholic parish of Christ the Redeemer in that city was to mark its 10th anniversary. Bishop Sipovich thus was able to take a little time off from his Marian duties to celebrate the Pontifical Liturgy for the Belarusian community and convey the Papal blessing.

In June Bishop Sipovich was able to find a few free days to visit the Belarusian community in Toronto, Canada. On Sunday 13 June after the Liturgy there was a reception in his honour, at which he was warmly greeted by Father Michael Matsukevich, a Belarusian Orthodox priest, who was to become later Archbishop Nicholas, head of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Exile. On the following Sunday, 20 June, in New York, the Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run'" gave a reception to mark the silver jubilee of Bishop Sipovich's priesthood.

As can be seen, Bishop Sipovich tried as well as he could to combine the duties of the Superior General of Marian Fathers with those of the Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. It was not always easy, and sometimes he was put in a position where he had to make a difficult choice. One such situation arose in connection with preparation to mark 1000 years of Christianity in Poland, which was planned for 1966. On 28 January 1965 Bishop Sipovich received a letter from Bishop Wladyslaw Rubin, chairman of the Central Committee for the Celebration of the Millenium of Christianity in Poland, in which he wrote: "I have the honour to ask Your Lordship, as the Superior General of Marian Fathers, to accept the membership of the Honorary Committee of this Millenium". It was a delicate situation, because the majority of members of the Marian Congregation were Poles. Understandably Bishop Sipovich took his time before giving his reply. Finally, on 19 February he wrote to Rubin: "In answer to your letter of 28.1.1965 I wish to let you know that I cannot accept the honour of the membership of the Honorary Committee for the Celebration of the Millenium of the Baptism of Poland. There are many reasons for it; the most important of them being that, in the case of my accepting the membership, even purely honorary, I foresee difficulties in the exercise of my duties of the Visitor for Belarusians, which I perform by the will of the Apostolic See simultaneously with the office of the Superior general of Marian Fathers".

In September Bishop Sipovich came to London from Lisbon to take with him his old teacher, Father Hermanovich to Rome to show him the working of the Council. Father Hermanovich spent a few weeks in Rome, attending the sessions of the Council as the Bishop's "secretary".

Soon after beginning of the session of the Council sad news reached Bishop Sipovich. He wrote in his diary on 27 September: "The sad news came from Poland of the death of Fr C. Smulka. Also Fr Archpriest Salaviej telephoned from Germany to let me know that Fr Dr M. Maskalik had died. It is sad that the small number of our Belarusian priests is becoming smaller". Father Casimir Smulka, who died on 15 September 1965 aged 71, was one of the Belarusian Marian Fathers who were deported from Druia in 1938. Father Michael Maskalik, a priest of the Eastern rite, was the Belarusian chaplain in Northern Germany. He died on 25 September 1965 at the age of 62.

During the first week of November, when there was a break in the work of the Council, the boys of St Cyril’s House visited Rome at the invitation of Bishop Sipovich. They arrived on 30 October. On the following day, which was Sunday, during the Pontifical Liturgy, at which the boys sang, Robert Tamushanski was ordained deacon. The rest of their time was spent in visiting the Eternal City, culminating with a Papal audience on Wednesday 3 November.

At last came 7 December, the final working day of the Council. Bishop Sipovich makes the entry in his diary: "Today in Rome and in Constantinople the anathema of 1054 is going to be repealed! Could anyone at the beginning of the Council dream that such thing might happen!?"

As is well known, 1054 marked the unhappy rift between Rome and Constantinople which has persisted to this day. The repeal of the anathema was the first step towards healing this rift.

Then Sipovich continues: "At 10.20 a.m Bishop Willebrands reads in French the document, according to which the Papal Legate Humbert’s excommunication of the Patriarch Cerularius, and the excommunication of the Roman Church by the Patriarch and his Synod, are declared null and void. Many Fathers are moved to tears, I among them. Long applause.

At 10.50-11.20 a.m. the Holy Father gives a homily. The keynote of this Council – ‘immense love towards all men’".

On Wednesday 8 December, the feast of Immaculate Conception in the Roman rite, in St Peter’s Square there was the solemn ceremony to mark the closing of the Council. Therew was aPapal Mass and messages of the Council Fathers to various groups of people (rulers; intellectuals and scientists; artists; women; the poor, the sick and the suffering; workers; youth). Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "God granted a great favour to this world: the Council. The Fathers of the Council, and especially Pope Paul VI, did everything to shake up the world, to bring it nearer to God, to show the way of Christ. Will the world listen to the voice of the Council? The voice of the Church? I thing there will be many people of good will who will follow the voice of the Church".

Bishop Sipovich arrived from Rome in London on Sunday afternoon 19 December. He was just in time for the Christmas party at St Cyril’s House, at which, apart from the boys, many members of the London Belarusian community were present. Among the gifts there was a special one for Father Haroshka: the announcement of his elevation to the dignity of Archimandrite (the Byzantine equivalent of abbot).

## 15. Between Moscow and Warsaw

The Council was over, but there remained for the Church the task of implementing its message, both with regard to her internal life and her relations with other Christian bodies and with the whole world.

For Bishop Sipovich who had taken an active part in the work of the Council and some of its commissions, the immediate effect was that he could have more time for other matters. As Superior General of Marian Fathers he still had to be resident in Rome, and make canonical visits to Marian communities throughout the world. Thus in 1966 from 22 February to 20 March he was visiting Marian communities in Brazil and Argentina. In 1968 he spent four months, from 7 May to 9 September, in a round-the-world trip from Rome via London to the United States, New Zealand, Australia, India, the Holy Land, and back to Rome. Then from 15 February to 21 March 1969 it was South America again: Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Brasilia, Curitiba, Porto Alegre) and Argentina (Buenos Aires, Rosario, Cordoba). Although the affairs of Marian congregation were the main reason for all these travels, Bishop Sipovich took the advantage of them, often making side trips, to meet Belarusians wherever he went, celebrating liturgy, preaching, giving talks etc. Thus in 1968, apart from New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Washington etc. where he had already been before, he visited for the first time Belarusian communites in Los Angeles in the U.S.A., as well as in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth in Australia. Where there was no organised Belarusian life, as in Brazil, Argentina and New Zealand, he tried to visit individual Belarusian families.

Despite his heavy commitments with the Marian Congregation, after the end of the Council Bishop Sipovich had more time for Belarusian matters. In particular he spent more time in London at Marian House which he considered his home. There were many things going there. First of all the St Cyril's House and the presence of a group of young boys brought new life to the place. In summer, when the boys were on vacation, there was a summer camp at St Cyril's House for other children of Belarusian families; this was organised with the help of the Association of Belarusians. Apart from religious activities, there was also flourishing cultural life. Thanks to the Anglo-Belarusian Society in 1965 there appeared the first issue of *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, an English-language publication dedicated to the problems of Belarusian history and culture. In 1966 the Society launched its first Course of Belarusian Culture (in English), which became an annual event. All this attracted to Belarusian studies a number of English and other Slavic scholars. The English poet Vera Rich who had been coming regularly to Marian House since 1953 conceived then idea of an anthology of Belarusian poetry in English translation. The idea found enthusiastic support on the part of Father Haroshka. His knowledge of Belarusian literature proved invaluable in helping Vera Rich to choose the authors and their works and in preparing interlinear translation. Before appearing in book form several works of Belarusian poets in Vera Rich's translation were printed in various periodical publications, including Vera's own poetry journal, "Manifold". There were also memorable poetry evenings in honour of well known Belarusian poets, such as Ianka Kupala and Iakub Kolas in 1962, Zmitrok Biadula in 1967 etc. The anthology of Belarusian poetry in English translation, *Like Water, like Fire*, appeared in 1971 under the auspices of UNESCO.

In 1966 Bishop Sipovich finally succeeded in bringing from Poland to London another Belarusian Marian priest. He was Father Felix Zhurnia, a friend of Bishop Sipovich from Druia and Vilna, where they had studied together. After the expulsion of the Marians from Druia Fr Zhurnia had remained in Poland, where he finished his theological studies and was ordained priest in 1943. A man of great goodness and profound faith, he was also a convinced Belarusian. In Poland he was the only one of the Belarusian Marians who regularily read the Belarusian paper *Niva* which had been published in Bialystok since 1956, and kept in touch with the Belarusian Club in Warsaw. He came to London by the end of August 1966. Despite his poor health and failing eyesight, he at once began to work. In particular he became a regular contributor to *Bozhym shliakham*, beginning with the first issue of 1967 onwards. Father Zhurnia belonged to the Roman rite. A special chapel was arranged at St Cyril’s House for him; this was also used by a Slovak priest who at that time lodged at Marian House.

On 3 December 1966 deacon Robert Tamushanski was ordained priest by Bishop Sipovich. The ordination took place at Koenigstein seminary. Soon afterwards the new priest came to London where he celebrated his first Liturgy on Sunday 18 December. He was appointed assistant to Father Nadson who by then had become head of St Cyril’s House. Father Robert’s young age (he was 28), musical and linguistic talents, and the fact that he, like the boys, was born outside Belarus and could therefore understand their mentality better, made him very valuable in work with young people.

One of the effects of the Vatican II Council was the development of the ecumenical movement within the Catholic Church. Ecumenism is a movement seeking the ways of uniting all Christians within the One Church of Christ. Its basis is the universal character of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, thanks to which all men are called to be children of God. A strong impulse to the ecumenical movement was given by Pope Paul VI with his pilgrimage in 1964 to the Holy Land and his meetings with the Patriarch of Constantinople Athenagoras I. In 1967 the two met twice: in Constantinople in June, and in October in Rome.

Of course the coming together of all Christians did not always go smoothly. There were many who were not very keen on the ecumenical movement. Bishop Sipovich noted an interesting episode, which happened on 30 June 1966 during the *Te Deum* at the Westminster Cathedral, celebrated by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cardinale to mark the anniversary of the coronation of Pope Paul VI: "The Apostolic Delegate is quite nervous. Apparently he wanted the Orthodox, Armenian and Anglican bishops to be in the presbyterium (sanctuary), but the canons objected on the grounds of the ‘lack of space’".

Bishop Sipovich’s attitude towards the Orthodox had always been ecumenical: he was on the best of terms with many Orthodox priests, and wherever possible tried to cooperate with them without, of course, compromising his faith. In fact he had as many, if not more, friends among the Orthodox as among Catholics. After the Ecumenical Council he became still more open. He had many interesting encounters. Thus on 1 and 2 January 1966 when he was in Nottingham, he met the new Belarusian Orthodox priest, Fr John Ababurka. In his diary he made the following note: "Fr J. Ababurka... made a very good impression on me: modest, pious, a patriot". On the following day Fr. Ababurka came to see Bishop Sipovich and they had a long talk: "In the morning Fr J. Ababurka came to see me. During our conversation he said: ‘I don’t see any difference between the Orthodox and Catholic

churches. One has to be, however, cautious in our pastoral work, because people are still not ready for Christian Unity'".

On 11 October 1967 Alexander Marhovich, a young and promising Belarusian scholar and a graduate of the Catholic University of Louvain (Leuven) died in Munich. He was Orthodox. It was a sad loss for the whole Belarusian community. The Orthodox priest from Belgium, Father Eugene Smarshchok (also former student of the Louvain University and friend of Marhovich) and Bishop Sipovich went to his funeral. Father Smarshchok conducted the funeral service, while Bishop Sipovich presided. He wrote in his diary of 16 October: "Father Smarshchok celebrates, assisted by a deacon from the Ukrainian Orthodox church. I am assisted by Mgr Salaviej and a Ukrainian Orthodox priest. During the entire service I perform everything which belongs to the bishop: give the blessing 'Peace be to all', recite the prayer of absolution. In the cemetery Father Smarshchok gave a homily (he began: 'Lord, give the blessing')". Such a joint service would have been unthinkable before the Ecumenical Council.

At the start of his round-the-world journey in 1968, on 11 May in New York Bishop Sipovich was at a reception, which was held in the hall of the Belarusian Orthodox church. It was the Belarusian Orthodox Bishop Basil who in his speech stressed the need of unity among Christians, and recalled the meetings between the Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras. Later in many places Bishop Sipovich had the opportunity to talk to the Orthodox about religious matters and Christian Unity. There was a great interest. It was particularily vivid in Australia, where Belarusians had an opportunity to meet a Belarusian Catholic Bishop for the first time. At a meeting in Sydney on 9 August there was "Discussion about Church unity. When shall it come? What is being done about it? etc.". The same thing in Melbourne. On one occasion on 12 August he was bombarded by a Belarusian with various questions. "I tried to answer him calmly and sincerely", he wrote in his diary. "At one point he said: 'Now I know, My Lord, why they call you a soul-snatcher!'".

In Rome Bishop Sipovich had the opportunity to meet Orthodox priests from the Moscow Patriarchate. One of them was Father Vitalis Baravy (Borovoi), a Belarusian, a former professor of the Leningrad Theological Academy and observer at the Vatican II Council. After the end of the Council he was appointed observer of the Moscow Patriarchate at the World Council of Churches in Geneva. In spring 1967 he was in Rome. On 2 March he came to see Bishop Sipovich, and they had a long conversation. Bishop Sipovich made a few notes about Baravy's views on certain problems and persons: "Archpriest Baravy is very loquacious, intelligent and quite open. About the Vatican Council he said: It would be better if it had not happened at all, if after the Council they do not put its decrees into practice. About the Holy Father he says: An intelligent, even too intelligent man! He has not yet made a single mistake; and he will not make any, because he studies every detail, thinks a lot; and will not achieve any great decisive things, because he will see all obstacles... About Vatican diplomacy: it is conducted very wisely, but in certain of our affairs the wise Casarolis do not understand much. They need the help of the Slipyis and Sipovichs. It is also necessary for Vatican diplomacy to cooperate with the Orthodox Church, otherwise the Communists will fool them as they fooled d'Herbigny... About Belarus he said: she will be neither capitalist nor communist. But she also will not be such as the Belarusians in London and elsewhere want her to be... During supper he spoke about his hard life, imprisonment and how he had become professor of the Leningrad Academy... Now the 'guardian angels' from the Soviet secret police no longer watch him, and that is why he feels much better. But before, he says, they watched not only

what he was doing and how, but even when he was asleep... Before departing he repeated a few times: ‘Zhyvie (Long live)’. I answered: ‘Zhyvie!’. All Belarusians are well aware that this means ‘Zhyvie Belarus!’ (Long live Belarus!)".

Early in 1968 two Orthodox priests from the Moscow Patriarchate came to Rome on study leave. They stayed at the Russicum. This had apparently been arranged by Archbishop Nicodemus, the chief observer of the Moscow Patriarchate at the Vatican Council. One of the priests, Peter Raina, was a Belarusian and a former student of Father Baravy. The other priest, Vladimir Rozhkov, was a Russian.

On 17 March Bishop Sipovich gave a lecture at the Oriental Institute on Francis Skaryna, the first Belarusian printer and translator of the Bible. Among those present was Father Raina who afterwards came up to Sipovich and said: "You spoke about Skaryna with national pride".

On 8 April Raina came to see Bishop Sipovich, and they had a long conversation. Here are a few extracts from the notes made by the Bishop in his diary: "(Fr Raina) told me the following fact. He was the parish priest of an Orthodox parish near Orsha. One Sunday a woman came to him and asked whether she could make her confession and receive Holy Communion and still remain a Catholic. Father Raina answered, why not? On the following Sunday 10 Catholic women came, and then about a hundred... To my question: ‘How big was your parish?’, he answered: ‘We do not count and do not record. We try to serve everybody who comes to us. The Metropolitan of Minsk Pitirim, – he was a wise man, – told us to do this’. During the time of Khrushchov about 800 Orthodox churches were closed. The man responsible for this was the Orthodox bishop Barlaam who deserves to be called a devil... He closed the seminary in Zhyrovitsy where Fr Raina studied and Fr Baravy was professor... Krushchov and Bishop Barlaam destroyed the Church... ‘The most important thing now, – says Fr Raina, – is to preserve God in the hearts of men. The people in Belarus are good. The churches are full. Let us hope it will not become worse’".

On 16 April, after the dinner at the Russicum on the occasion of the two Orthodox priests being recalled to Moscow for the Orthodox Easter, Bishop Sipovich wrote: "How can one understand all this? One should admire the courage of the Jesuits, but also of Metropolitan Nicodemus who agreed to send his priests to the centre of Christendom under the care of the Jesuits... It is worth noting that until now the Russicum has represented fully the old tsarist ‘holy’ Russia with all its aggressive and imperialistic ambitions. These two priests are Soviet men! And, say what you will, the Soviet Union is not Russia. One of them is conscious of his Belarusian nationality and admits it. Certainly, ‘Orthodox’ ritualism covers everything, but is it not time for the Russicum to become the ‘Sovieticum’?".

On 10 December 1968 Bishop Sipovich made the following entry in his diary : "Fr Peter Raina came from the Russicum to see me. He told me an interesting and for him unpleasant incident. A few weeks ago he and his colleague Fr Vladimir Rozhkov were going to pay a visit to Cardinal J. Slipyi. When the secretary of the Cardinal rang, it was Fr Peter Raina who took the call. Unable to find Fr Vladimir he went alone to see the Cardinal. When they met later, Fr Vladimir angrily shouted: ‘Who gave you authority to go and see the Cardinal? We shall talk about this in Moscow...’. Thus Fr Vladimir betrayed his true character and showed that he was an ‘authorised’ informer".

Bishop Sipovich and Father Raina became friends, and corresponded for many years long after both left Rome. Father Raina helped Bishop Sipovich to obtain

certain books from Belarus, as well as photocopies of all the Francis Skaryna editions which were held in the State Library in Moscow.

Another problem which occupied Bishop Sipovich in the post-Conciliar period was that of Apostolic Administrator for Catholics of the Roman rite in Belarus.

The situation of the Catholic Church in Soviet Belarus was very bad. There were a few dozen Catholic priests, most of them elderly, but no bishop or apostolic administrator or any formal hierarchical structure. Most priests were Poles or polonised Belarusians. They were concentrated for the most part in the western regions which before 1939 had been under Polish rule and formed part of the Vilna and Pinsk dioceses. For the portions of those dioceses which after the 1939-45 war remained in Poland administrators were appointed with seats in Bialystok ("Belastok" in Belarusian) and Drohiczyn. No doubt these administrators (who were usually of bishop's rank) looked upon the territories east of the Polish-Soviet border as being within their jurisdiction. But the real power was in Warsaw. On 1 December 1968 Bishop Sipovich had a long conversation with Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski, Archbishop of Warsaw and primate of Poland. In his diary he wrote: "The Cardinal has jurisdiction over those parts of the Pinsk and Vilna dioceses which belonged to these dioceses when they were under Polish rule. He must be very cautious in exercising this jurisdiction in order not to harm priests in their pastoral work in Belarus. From time to time he ordains priests for Belarus, but about this absolutely no one must know. He maintains contacts with Belarus with the help of nuns".

About two years earlier, on 28 February 1967, Bishop Sipovich had spoken to Mgr C. Krivaitis, a Lithuanian priest from Vilna on a visit in Rome, who told him: "Polish priests do everything possible to polonise Belarusians. They bring (from Poland) various liturgical and other books. Cardinal Wyszynski has appointed three priests as his representatives: Aronowicz, Aloisius Tomkowicz, P. Bartoszewicz. All three fanatical Poles".

Thus, despite many political and social changes, not to mention the far-reaching reforms of the Vatican II Council, Belarusian Catholics, alone among the peoples in the world, were still deprived of their right to pray and hear the word of God in their native language, presumably all in the cause of preserving the unity of the Church...

There were of course exceptions in this gloomy picture, the most notable of them being the parish of Vishnieva, some 50 miles north-west of Minsk. The parish priest there was Father Uladyslau Charniauski (1916-2001), a member of the Marian Congregation. He obtained his secondary education at Druia and in 1937 entered the novitiate of Marian Fathers. After the fall of Poland in 1939 Charniauski was accepted by the Lithuanian province of the Marian Fathers and did his theological studies in Kaunas and Vilna. In 1944 he was ordained priest and worked for some time in various Lithuanian parishes. But in 1953 he asked permission to return to Belarus, because, as he wrote to Bishop Sipovich on 12 December 1965, he "wanted at least once in his life to speak to the people in the native tongue". He stayed in Vishnieva for the rest of his life. As he said in the same letter: "Somehow I got used to the people, and they got used to me and understood me. I mean my priestly work plus Belarusian spirit".

In his work Father Charniauski suffered many difficulties and unpleasantnesses from the Communist authorities, but mainly from other Catholic priests who, as he wrote in his letter to Bishop Sipovich on 26 February 1966, "take their cue from Warsaw and Bialystok in their pastoral work, and behaving thus, they

wound and destroy the national consciousness, feeling and dignity of our brothers and sisters, making them spiritual cripples. They deny them the right to pray and hear the Word of God in their native tongue. In my time I had to suffer much when I started to pray and preach in Belarusian".

Bishop Sipovich first heard about the work of Father Charniauski in 1964 from Lithuanian priests who came to Rome on the occasion of the Ecumenical Council. In 1965 a direct contact was established between the two men by means of correspondence, observing certain precautionary measures. Towards the end of 1964 Bishop Sipovich approached the Vatican Secretariate of State, informing them of the state of the Catholic Church in Belarus and stressing the need to appoint a Belarusian Apostolic Administrator, preferably with the rank of bishop. As a candidate for this post Bishop Sipovich proposed Father Charniauski. The proposal was taken seriously and an official of the Secretariat of State, Mgr Gabriel Montalvo, was appointed to deal directly with it. The study of the proposal took time, because the problem was new to the Vatican and the Vatican Council was still in session, which took precedence before everything else. But it was not forgotten, and eventually the Vatican accepted the proposal of Bishop Sipovich. On 6 December 1965 a letter, signed by the Secretary of State, Cardinal Amleto Cigognani, was sent to Father Charniauski, asking him whether he would agree to accept the office of Apostolic Administrator in Belarus, circumstances permitting. Since there was no answer (apparently the address was incorrect), a second identical letter was sent on 20 December. As it happened Father Charniauski received both letters on 28 December.

Father Charniauski was not in a hurry with his answer, and wrote to Bishop Sipovich only two months later, on 26 February 1966. First he went to Vilna to ask the opinion of his Lithuanian friends who advised him to go and see the civil authorities in Minsk. Before doing this he wanted to ask the advice of Bishop Sipovich. He also asked the Bishop's help "to convince the Primate in Warsaw (i.e. Cardinal Wyszynski – *A.N.*) and his other bishops that they not only should not make obstructions in this matter, but, once the question of Administration is positively decided, accept his authority and not interfere in the gradual introduction of the Belarusian language in preaching and liturgy, in accordance with the decrees of the Fathers of the Council. If this is not done, then, despite the establishment of the administration, everything will remain as it has been till now".

Thus it was a conditional acceptance on the part of Father Charniauski. On 2 April Mgr Montalvo told Bishop Sipovich that the Holy Father had been informed and had given his approval. Then began long and delicate negotiations with the Soviet authorities. The Pope, having in mind the bitter experience of the policy of D'Herbigny, did not want to do anything secretly, because that would make the situation still more difficult: sooner or later the Soviet authorities would learn about the appointment of the Administrator and may arrest him and send him away from Belarus. On the other hand the Holy See did not want to ask the permission of the Soviet authorities. The explicit instruction of the Pope, written with his own hand (con proprio pugno) was to inform and not to ask (annunciare, non chiedere). Father Charniauski on his part was instructed to approach the relevant civil authorities in Minsk and in Moscow.

On 27 April 1966 Pope Paul VI received the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Hramyka (Gromyko). Bishop Sipovich made a note in his diary: "I hope that in conversation with Hramyka the matter of the Apostolic Administration in Belarus was raised". But according to Cardinal Slipyi who had an audience with the Holy Father on 2 September, "the meeting of the Pope and Hramyka was a flop".

Incidentally, although Hramyka tried hard to forget it, he was a Belarusian, born in the village Staryia Hramyki in the Homel province in South-East Belarus.

On 17 October 1966, at a special meeting of bishops Samoré e Dell'Acqua (Secretariat of State), Brini (Oriental Congregation), Willebrands (Secretariat for Christian Unity), Brazys (Apostolic Visitor for Lithuanians) and Sipovich a decision was made to invite Father Charniauski to Rome. To make the things easier he was appointed Counsellor (Consultor) of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This was normal, because Father Charniauski had been working for some time on Belarusian translations of Latin liturgical texts.

On 30 January 1967 the Pope received the "president" of the Soviet Union (in fact Speaker of the Soviet Parliament) Podgorny, during which, as the Vatican paper *L'Osservatore Romano* reported, he raised with him "problems relating to the religious life and the presence of the Catholic Church in the territory of the Soviet Union". Bishop Sipovich made a note in his diary: "Let's hope that the Pope at that moment had in mind also Belarus and the Apostolic Administrator in Belarus". According to the same *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Pope gave a gift to Podgorny, "as a manifestation of his special esteem and his living affection for the great Russian people (a manifestazione della sua speciale stima e del suo vivo affetto per il Grande Popolo Russo)". Bishop Sipovich made the following comment: "The phrase in the *L'O. R*. 'A manifestazione...' sounds somewhat false. 'Il Grande Popolo Russo' is taken straight from Soviet newspapers. Podgorny himself is a Ukrainian and the president of the Soviet Union, and not the representative of 'the great Russian people'".

The reason why the Vatican agreed to contacts with high Soviet representatives was an attempt to improve the fate of millions of Catholic faithful (of Roman rite, because the question of Byzantine rite Catholics there was notraised) of various nationalities in the Soviet Union. The Soviet authorities, on the other hand, wanted to gain "respectability" by being recognised even by the Vatican. In these circumstances it was not unthinkable that, if it suited their purpose, they would agree to the Apostolic Administration in Belarus.

Apart from the Soviets, there were the Poles who considered the Catholic Church in Belarus as their exclusive pitch. That is why his Lithuanian friends, and in particular Mgr Krivaitis, advised Fr Charniauski to exercise extreme caution, lest the Poles hear about the proposed Apostolic Administration and start making difficulties. However, the news somehow got out, and the rumours began to spread. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on 29 March 1967: "Monsignor Tatarynovich rings me late at night and asks: Why do you keep secrets from me? I ask, what secrets? He says that he received a letter from Poland from Fr Barysevich who writes that there are rumours that Fr Charniauski, a Marian from Druia, is going to be appointed Administrator of Belarus and consecrated Bishop of Minsk in April this year! After this conversation I could not sleep for a long time".

In fact Fr Victor Barysevich from Grygaly near Olsztyn in Poland in a letter, written in Belarusian and dated Easter 1967, i.e. not later than 26 March, wrote: "I don't know if it is true, but apparently Father Uladyslau Charniauski, a Druia Marian, who has been appointed Apostolic Administrator for Belarus, in April is going to receive the Minsk diocese and that part of our diocese (i.e. Pinsk – *A.N.*) which is there".

The cat was out of the bag, and this did not help.

One year passed since the decision to invite Father Charniauski to Rome had been made, and still nothing happened. Bishop Sipovich was on the point of going to

the Holy Land. Suddenly, on 8 December 1967 he received a telegram: "Depart by train 9 December. Carriage Moscow-Rome. Meet me 11 December in the morning".

Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "There is no doubt: the telegram is from Father Uladyslau Charniauski. And exactly on the day of our greatest Marian feast. This is a gift from the Immaculate Mother of God!". The Holy Land trip had to be cancelled.

At last came Monday 11 December: "In the morning I am hurrying to the station... Mgr Montalvo from the Secretariat of State also came to the station. We talk, wait. Exactly at 8.30 a.m. the train from Trieste arrives, and with it the direct carriage from Moscow. Near the carriage we see Father Uladyslau Charniauski with a suitcase and briefcase. Deeply moved we greet each other. After 30 years we meet again! He looks well. The suit of almost brick-red colour, a cap on the head. Typical Soviet citizen!".

On Wednesday 13 December there was a meeting with Archbishop Agostino Casaroli from the Secretariat of State. Father Charniauski informed him about the religious situation in Belarus, and Bishop Sipovich acted as interpreter. In his record of the meeting there is an interesting detail: "From the account of Fr Charniauski it appears that the authorities in Minsk would like to have an Apostolic Administrator, but can do nothing without Moscow. His. Exc. Casaroli says: ‘Is this not the sign of the Republic’s Belarusian patriotism?’ We answered that that’s what it looks. It sounds strange, but the official responsible for religious affairs in Minsk told Fr Charniauski that in Rome he should ask the Vatican to put pressure on Moscow!".

The days that followed were filled with meetings with various Vatican officials and waiting for a Papal audience which was not easy to arrange, as it was Christmas time. In the meantime Father Charniauski’s permission to stay abroad, given by the authorities in Minsk, was running out. On 3 January 1968 he went to the Soviet consulate where he was received by a consul called Youdkin. He was charming and said that if this is the Holy Father’s wish, then Fr Charniauski should remain and need not worry about anything. He also said that he, and perhaps even the ambassador, would like to talk to Fr Charniauski before his audience with the Holy Father.

Two weeks later, on 16 January, it was Youdkin himself who rang. Fr Charniauski went to see him and was told to ask the Vatican to arrange the papal audience as soon as possible, because the authorities in Minsk may be not pleased with his prolonged stay abroad. He also asked Charniauski whether he knew of any other candidate, apart from himself, for the post of Apostolic Administrator. This made Fr Charniauski worried.

The Papal audience took place on Monday 22 January. In a sense it was a formality, but a very important one, because it was during this audience that the official announcement of the appointment of an Apostolic Administrator was expected. Unfortunately, because of the illness of Archbishop Casaroli negotiations with the Soviet authorities were suspended, and without their agreement nothing could be done. That is why the Holy Father said to Father Charniauski in Latin: "To you is given the office of Apostolic Administrator (Tibi confertur munus Administratoris Apostolici)", adding in Italian to Bishop Sipovich: "You know on what conditions (Lei sa sotto quali condizioni)". This was not very satisfactory, but it was the best that could be done in the circumstances.

Father Charniauski stayed in Rome for another week. On 27 January he received an official letter from the Secretary of State, Cardinal Cicognani, which said among other things:

"The August Pontiff desires once again to testify his benevolence towards you and assure you... that he has always before his eyes the needs and hopes of many Catholics of the noble Belarusian people, for whom he nurtures a special feeling of love.

Because of this, His Holiness who has recently received you, has made clear to you that he has in mind to appoint you Apostolic Administrator and equally to elevate you to the episcopal dignity.

However, as you know, this cannot be yet put into effect, because there exist not a few conditions with regard to the civil authorities. Nontheless, the hope is sustained for the future that, either through the efforts of the Holy See or your own before those authorities, all difficulties will soon be overcome"[42].

Two days earlier, on 25 January, Fr Charniauski had received a letter from the Congregation of Rites. in which there are enumerated his duties as Councillor (consultor) of this Congregation. In particular the letter says:

"You are therefore entrusted with the translation of Latin liturgical texts into your native Belarusian-Whiteruthenian language according to the Constitution and Decrees of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and Instructions of this Sacred Congregation of Rites, and to send your versions to Rome for the necessary approval"[43].

On Monday 29 January Father Charniauski left Rome for Belarus. Bishop Sipovich was ill in bed and could not see him off.

The results of Father Charniauski's visit to Rome were rather disappointing, but not unexpected. On 2 January Bishop wrote in his diary: "There are very many obstacles on the way to establishing the Apostolic Administration in Belarus. God, help us to overcome them all!". Both the Bishop and Charniauski viwed their chances realistically, as can be seen from the Bishop's entry on 10 January: "After we came out of St Peter's basilica, our conversation with Uladyslau turned to our affairs. God only knows how they will end, but we have arrived at the point when they have become the concern of top people: the Pope and the Soviet government. In human terms this is already a considerable success for Belarus. We both agree on this".

What was worrying was the change of attitude of the Soviet consul, who on 16 January was definitely cool; and his mysterious question implying the possible existence of another candidate for the post of Apostolic Administrator.

On 31 January Bishop Sipovich left for London. There he received a letter, dated 14 February, from a Lithuanian Marian Father, Casimir Vaishnora, informing him that a Polish priest from Hrodna in Belarus, a certain Father Arkadiusz, a Franciscan conventual friar had suddenly appeared in Rome. A few days after the

---

42 "Augustus Pontifex cupit benevolentiam Suam iterum tibi testificari teque certiorem facere Se... semper pre oculis habere necessitates atque spes multorum catholicorum nobilis populi bielorussici, quem peculiari diligit caritatis affectu.

Hanc enim ob causam Beatissimus Pater valde solicitus est, quod multos post annos, Ecclesia in Belorussia adhuc caret moderatore hierarchico.

Quam ob rem Sanctitas Sua cum recens te coram admisit, tibi patefecit in animo habere te Administratorem Apostolicum nominare pariterque dignitate episcopali augere.

Attamen, ut pro comperto habes, hoc nondum ad effectum deduci potest, cum nonnulae adhuc extent condiciones quod attinet ad civiles Auctoritates. Nihilominus spes alitur fore ut, sive a Sancta Sede sive abs te data opera apud easdem Auctoritates, omnes difficultates quam primum feliciter evinciantur".

43 "Tibi igitur committitur, liturgicos textus latinos, in Tuam nativam linguam Bielorussam-Alboruthenam, ad mentem Constitutionis et Decretorum Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani Secundi atque Instructionum huiusce Sacrae Congregationis Rituum vertere, et huiusmodi versiones Romam, pro opportuna approbatione, transmittere".

departure of Father Charniauski, Father Arkadiusz paid a visit to the Lithuanian College in Rome, where, according to Fr Vaishnora he said, that "Charniauski does not enjoy good reputation among the priests in Belarus, he is too nationalistic, ingenuous, a gossip, too well disposed towards the authorities in Minsk. There is no need of any hierarchy in Belarus, because the administration functions well: there are deans who receive the necessary faculties from Bishop Sawicki in Bialystok (i.e. from Poland – *A.N.*). To tell the truth, there are no Catholic Belarusians in Belarus (they are all Orthodox), only Poles, therefore the liturgical language in the churches can only be Polish etc... Mgr Tulaba (rector of the Lithuanian College in Rome – *A.N.*) says that he does not act in person and directly, but through the medium of Mgrs Rubin (later cardinal – *A.N.*) and Filipiak who act as champions of his cause in relevant (Vatican – *A.N.*) departments".

On his return to Rome on 12 March Bishop Sipovich made inquiries about this Father Arkadiusz and reported his findings to Archbishop Casaroli in a letter dated 4 April. According to him Arkadiusz arrived in Rome on 12 January and left no later than 6 March. He knew Father Charniauski personally and was aware of his presence in Rome, but kept quiet till the latter's departure from that city. He wanted to see Archbishop Casaroli but failed because of the Archbishop's illness. In Rome Father Arkadiusz lived in the Franciscan convent near the church of the Holy Apostles, and was helped by another Polish Franciscan friar, Father Slominski. The latter, in a conversation with Bishop Sipovich said: "It would be good, very good if Fr Charniauski became a bishop. There is chaos now in Belarus. Cardinal Wyszynski must not interfere".

Incidentally, as a Soviet citizen, Father Arkadiusz had to register with the Soviet consulate immediately on his arrival in Rome. Thus Youdkin knew about him when on 16 January he asked Fr Charniauski about another candidate for the post of Apostolic Administrator.

There is a Belarusian saying, "Dzie koratka, tam rvietstsa (short string breaks easier)". Normally after Fr Charniauski's Roman visit there should have been a follow-up. Unfortunately, apart from Bishop Sipovich, there was no one in Rome who would make sure that the matter of an Apostolic Administrator in Belarus should not be forgotten. It so happened that in 1968 the affairs of the Marian Congregation kept Bishop Sipovich away from Rome for nearly six months. On 6 May, the eve of his four-month trip around the world, he had a meeting with Archbishop Casaroli who told him that: 1. since the departure of Fr Charniauski he had not seen the Soviet ambassador; and 2. the Secretariat of State had been receiving letters from Poles protesting against the appointment of Father Charniauski.

The feelings of the Polish clergy can be judged from the letter, dated 23 October 1968, from Father Michal Wilniewczyc, professor at the Seminary in Drohiczyn (Poland) to Father Aleksy Petrani, professor at the Catholic University in Lublin and former protegé of d'Herbigny. Wilniewczyc wrote: "I don't remember if in my last letter I told you that I was on the other side (of the frontier, i.e. in Belarus – *A.N.*); it was in August. Our priests there are despondent because of the announcement of the candidate for the ordinary, Fr Charniauski, a Marian, Belarusian fanatic (szowinista) that as soon as he becomes bishop, the first thing will be the introduction of Belarusian language in all churches; and any priest who does not obey, will be dismissed and replaced by Marian Belarusians... Fr Charniauski is a tactless and imprudent man and, what is worse, a Belarusian fanatic who intends to spread the kingdom of Belarus rather than that of Christ. Our priests are unanimous in saying that what the Soviets did not succeed in destroying, will be destroyed by the Church; that the Vatican does not understand that the Church of the faithful in

Belarus consists of Poles and not Belarusians; that Belarusians in their overhelming majority profess the Orthodox and not the Roman Catholic faith; that if the Belarusian language is introduced in the churches there will be a rebellion among priests and faithful, who will not want to obey such anorder None of our priests is able to speak Belarusian; they would sooner speak Russian... Personally I had the impression that the Church as an organised community and the Polish cause are in a terminal state. The young generation don't understand Polish; Poles and their language are ridiculed. With few exceptions parents don't teach Polish to their children...". The letter is a good illustration of the situation in Belarus, where a Polish priest did not even bother to learn the language of his parishioners, but expected them to learn his; while a Belarusian priest who spoke his native language with his people was called a fanatic.

It was not till the end of 1968 that Bishop Sipovich could attend to the problem of Apostolic Administration. During his meeting with Cardinal Wyszynski on 1 December he stressed the need in Belarus for a *Belarusian bishop*; the cardinal replied that there certainly was a need for *a bishop* in Belarus. A subtle change of emphasis which made all the difference. The two men used the same words, but they might have spoken different languages. Bishop Sipovich finished his account of the meeting: "I hope that my conversation with His Em. Cardinal Wyszynski will not harm the cause of getting a Belarusian bishop appointed".

The meeting with Wyszynski may be considered the last major attempt to salvage the project of Apostolic Administration in Belarus. In the years that followed there were letters exchanged on this subject between Bishop Sipovich, Father Charniauski and the Vatican Secretariat of State, but it was becoming exceedingly obvious that their efforts failed to produce the desired result. This is not the place to consider the reasons for this failure, except perhaps to say that the Polish Catholic Church cannot escape her share of blame.

During the first half of 1969 Bishop Sipovich was busy with the affairs of the Marian Congregation because of the forthcoming General Chapter and election of a new Superior General. On return from the canonical visitation to South America, he wrote on 21 March in \his diary: "The General Chapter is not far away. I hope that God will free me from the duties of Superior General. Also my travels will come to an end, and I shall be able to work at home".

The Chapter began its work on 10 June and lasted till 30 July. The election of the new Superior General took place on Monday 28 July. On the eve of the election, 27 July, Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "Members of the chapter consult each other about tomorrow's elections... My sinful person must not enter into consideration. Even if they elect me I shall have to resign. There are rumours (spread by Fr Bukowicz) that neither Card. Wyszynski nor the Polish Communist Party want me to be Superior General. If this is true, it is very sad! That I may be undesirable for them is quite understandable. Especially, as the rumours have it, because of the Apost. Administrator in Belarus and because of the Kostomloty parish".

Kostomloty was a small Greek Catholic (Uniate) parish on the west bank of the river Bug which formed the frontier between Poland and Soviet Belarus. The parish priest was a Polish Marian Father who, mainly thanks to the influence of Father Padziava, had taken up the Byzantine rite. The Greek Catholic Church was suppressed and persecuted in the Sovet Union and other Communist-dominated countries. The existence of one Greek Catholic parish right on the doorstep of the Soviet Union must have been a strong irritant to the Soviet Communists and a

headache for their Polish colleagues. They blamed Bishop Sipovich for defending Kostomloty in Rome and before Cardinal Wyszynski.

Bishop Sipovich was aware of the forces against him. But they were not the main reason why he did not wish to serve for another term as Superior General of Marian Fathers. Being superior general of a religious congregation is a full-time job, but so is also that of Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. The previous six years showed Bishop Sipovich how difficult it was to combine them both. Moreover his health was failing. So he had to make a choice, and there was no doubt which one it would be: while there were other candidates for the post of Superior General, he was the only Belarusian Catholic bishop in the world. And yet, on the following day he did not remove his name from the list of candidates for Superior General. Perhaps he wished to be given a chance to bow out graciously by resigning after the first ballot with the knowledge that he had the confidence of the majority of the congregation, as it was the case with Buchys in 1933. But it was not to be. There were three ballots. During the first ballot Fr Sielski (Pole) obtained 16 votes, Bp Sipovich – 13, Fr Rimshelis (Lithuanian) – 4, and Fr Rzeszutek (Pole) – 1. The results of the second ballot were: Sielski 17, Rimshelis 9 and Sipovich 8. Finally in the third ballot Sielski obtained 18 votes and was elected new Superior General. Rimshelis and Sipovich obtained 12 and 4 votes respectively. The voting was secret, but the final results reflected pretty closely the ethnic composition of the chapter. Wyszynski and the Polish Communists – an unlikely alliance – must have been pleased.

If Bishop Sipovich felt snubbed, he did not show it. Except perhaps a year later when the General Chapter met again to conclude the unfinished work from the previous year. Bishop Sipovich made the following entry in his diary on 22 June 1970, the first working day of the Chapter: "At 9 o'clock we gather in the big room. Father General (Sielski – *A.N.*) greets me and invites me to sit at the chairman's table. I decline this honour and sit together with Fr Matulis".

Thus ended six difficult years in the life of Bishop Sipovich. He wound up his affairs in Rome and set out for London, where he arrived on 20 August 1969. On that day he wrote in his diary: " A new period in my life has begun. Six years were sufficient for me to feel slightly "out-of-touch" with London and our local problems. May God's will be done in everything! It is not by chance that again I have to live with these and not other people. It is not without purpose that God has gathered us in this house which I have bought, renewed and put in order".

## 16. "Exegi Monumentum"

On 22 August 1969, Father Thomas Padziava arrived in London. He had come to Rome from Poland in January and stayed there till the end of the General Chapter. Like a true absentminded philosopher, he arrived one day later than expected. In Florence he got out of the train for some reason, and the train departed without him but with all his belongings and documents. He took the first train to Bologna where, thanks to the courtesy of Italian Railways, his belongings were waiting for him. The next train to Calais went via Switzerland. The fact that he had no Swiss transit visa did not stop Father Padziava. On arrival at Victoria Station in London, without knowing a word of English, he telephoned Marian House. Bishop Sipovich went to meet him and... missed him. Eventually he was fetched by Fathers Hermanovich and Haroshka.

With the arrival of Fr Padziava there were now four Belarusian Marian fathers and two lay brothers at Marian House, not counting the bishop. Thus it seemed that Bishop Sipovich's dream of the "New Druia" was coming true. However, the age of the members of the Marian community gave cause for serious concern about its future: Bishop Sipovich, at the age of 55, was the youngest of them. There were two younger priests, but they were not members of the Marian Congregation. They were Fr Alexander Nadson, aged 43, Vice-Rector of the Belarusian Catholic Mission (the Rector was Fr Haroshka) and Head of St Cyril's boarding house for boys; and his assistant, 29-year old Fr Robert Tamushanski.

All priests, Marian and non Marian, (with the exception of Father Zhurnia who was of Roman rite) belonged to the Belarusian Catholic Mission of Byzantine Rite in England. The fact that the Rector of the Mission happened to be a Marian Father was often the cause of confusion between these two institutions. The confusion existed even among the Marian Fathers themselves. Thus towards the end of 1969, as the formalities over purchasing a house for the proposed Belarusian library (of which more below) were almost concluded, Fr Nadson asked in whose name it was going to be registered, and Fr Haroshka without giving it much thought answered: "Marian Fathers, of course!" Fortunately it never came to that. This tendency to identify Marian community with the Mission was the source of certain complications and tensions which initially were barely perceptible but were to have serious consequences in the future.

In 1969 there was a thriving Belarusian community in England, and especially in London. The Association of Belarusians in Great Britain, one of the oldest Belarusian emigré organisations, was well established, with properties in London, Bradford and Manchester. Under the wise and enlightened chairmanship of Paul Navara, and later Jan Michaluk, apart from its own activities, it was ready to support any worthwhile initiative, not only morally but also materially. This was possible thanks to the able management of the Association's assets by Paul Asipovich, its permanent treasurer. The organisation which profited most from this support was the Anglo-Belarusian Society. Its publication, *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies* and the annual courses of lectures of Belarusian culture did much to spread the knowledge of Belarus and its culture in the English speaking Academic circles. Some of the English and other Western Slavists, became regular contributors to the Journal and developed a life-long interest in Belarusian Studies. Among them were Professor A. B. McMillin, J. Dingley, T. French, P. Mayo and others. The moving spirit of the Anglo-Belarusian Society was its secretary Guy Picarda.

The priests of the Belarusian Mission were busy with their pastoral duties, the boarding house for boys, and the journal *Bozhym shliakham* (to which practically all

of them contributed regularly), but they also found time to take active part in the life of the Belarusian community. Father Haroshka was for several years a member of the Council of the Association of Belarusians and of the Belarusian Charitable Trust. Father Nadson was on the editorial board of, and a regular contributor to, *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*, and frequent lecturer on the courses of Belarusian Culture.

In London Bishop Sipovich devoted himself fully to his duties as Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. Now that he was no longer Superior General of Marian Fathers, he could also find some time for research and writing. The history of the Catholic Church in Belarus was of particular interest to him. As a result in 1970 and 1973 respectively *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies* published his articles, "History of the Minsk Diocese" and "Language problem in the Catholic Church in Belarus". He also was collecting material about Fr Tsikota with the view of writing about him a book which, however, remained unfinished in manuscript form.

Bishop Sipovich was a great bibliophile, and during his life he succeded in acquiring a number of interesting and valuable books. In 1960 Father Haroshka, another book-lover, brought his collection from Paris. Thus a small library of about 5000 titles was formed at Marian House. Half of them were religious books in different languages. But there were also a number of books in the Belarusian language and about Belarus, some of them rare. Unfortunately there was no suitable place to house them properly and to allow room for expansion.

Soon after his arrival from Rome, early in September 1969 (the school term had not yet started), during an after-lunch walk in the park Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich suddenly said: "Let’s found a Belarusian library!" He expressed the idea which for some time had been in the minds of other priests, and so it was immediately accepted. By unanimous decision the Library was named in honour of Francis Skaryna (c.1485-1540), the first Belarusian printer and translator of the Bible.

It was fortunate that just at this time the house at 37 Holden Road, similar to those at 39 and 41 which already belonged to the Mission, came up for sale, the middle-aged couple who owned it finding it too big after their children had grown up and left home. The price of £12000 was reasonable for that time, if one had it... Here Bishop Sipovich had to display his fund-raising skills to the full. A loan had to be arranged. All the priests had agreed to "tax" themselves voluntarily by giving part ot their Mass stipends to the Library Fund. But eventually it was thanks to the generosity and understanding of the Belarusian community worldwide that the necessary funds were raised. The appeal was made on 1 November 1969 and published in *Bozhym shliakham*. It was signed, apart from Bishop Sipovich in his capacity as Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians, by Auberon Herbert, chairman of the Anglo-Belarusian Society, and Paul Navara, chairman of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain. From the beginning it was made clear that the proposed library would be an independent Belarusian institution and not belong to any church or national organisation.

On 12 February Bishop Sipovich received the keys to the new house. On the following Sunday, 15 February, after the Liturgy there was an "open house", during which, after a talk by Father Haroshka about the fate of Belarusian libraries, all present, – Belarusians and their friends, – inspected the new building, in which there was nothing yet except bare walls and floors, – and held a party there.

Everyone expected Fr Haroshka to become the librarian. But it was not to be. After a slight disagreement with others about the arrangement of the bookshelves, he resigned not only as librarian but from the posts of Rector of the Mission and Superior of Marian House, and asked for permission to go to Paris. The arrangement

of shelves was a trifling thing, but it was symptomatic. Fr Haroshka was in many respects an outstanding man, exemplary and totally dedicated priest, but also an individualist by nature, endowed with a strong and somewhat unbending character. For over 20 years as a priest he had been alone and used to make his own decisions (which usually turned out to be correct). His achievements speak for themselves. His decision to join the Marian Congregation was a surprise for many who knew him. In London there were early signs that he was not completely happy, and that the community life was a burden to him. The ten years he spent in London were the most unproductive period in his life. Early in April 1970 he left for Paris, but did not stay long there. In the autumn of the same year he was appointed head of Belarusian programmes on the Vatican Radio, replacing Mgr Tatarynovich who was retiring on account of his age. It is safe to say that the standard of broadcasts under Father Haroshka has never been surpassed to the present day.

With the departure of Fr Haroshka for the lack of better candidates Fr Nadson became the librarian.

It took a year to carry out necessary repairs and alterations, install the shelves and other furniture, and then transfer the whole Belarusian collection from Marian House to the new premises.

Finally on Saturday 15 May 1971 the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum was officially opened by Prof. Robert Auty, Professor of Comparative Slavonic Philology at the University of Oxford. The Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, Archbishop Domenico Enrici, assisted by Bishop Sipovich, blessed the library in the presence of the Exarch of Ukrainian Catholics, Bishop Augustine Horniak, Father John Ababurka of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and the Deputy Mayor of Barnet. The many guests included several English academics working in the field of Slavonic studies, representatives of Ukrainian, Polish, Slovak etc. communities, and, of course, a great number of Belarusians from England, France, Germany and America.

The opening of the Francis Skaryna Library was an impressive feast of Belarusian culture and a personal triumph for Bishop Sipovich. But it was only the beginning of the real work.

The Library had a twofold purpose: to be a depository of all material, both in printed and manuscript forms, relating to Belarus, and thus preserve them from being lost or destroyed; and to act as a "window of Belarusian culture in the West", by making this material accessible to all those interested in any aspect of Belarusian studies.

The holdings of the library at the time of its opening might have looked impressive at the first sight, but those closely connected with it were aware of the fact how many important works were still missing. It had become their task, especially that of Bishop Sipovich and Fr Nadson, to fill those gaps. The easiest thing was to make sure of obtaining all new publications. Emigré publications presented no difficulty. But publishing in the Soviet Belarus was state controlled, and practically the only way to obtain certain books was to buy from the official Soviet book agency. This was expensive and there was no certainty that one would receive what was ordered. There was not much love lost between the Communist-controlled Soviet Belarus and the Belarusian emigration. It was therefore without much hope that Fr Nadson wrote to the Belarusian National Library and the Library of the Belarusian Academy of Sciences in Minsk, proposing a book exchange agreement. To everyone’s surprise they agreed. It was in particular the Academy of Sciences which was interested in emigré publications. A contact was thus established with mutual profit: The F. Skaryna Library received practically all new publications from Soviet

Belarus, while at least some privileged readers in Belarus had access to forbidden "nationalist" literature! It was a small "chink in the Iron Curtain". The Academy of Sciences also kindly helped the Library obtain some earlier and out-of-print publications. Another "supplier" was Fr Uladyslau Charniauski, who sent a number of books, usually posting them in the capital of Lithuania, Vilna (Vilnius) where the controls were not so strict.

For pre-war and 19th century publications the F. Skaryna Library was in touch with various antiquarian booksellers in Germany, Holland, France, Sweden and the United States, which specialised in Slavonic books. Belarusian was not very well known, and it was possible to get some valuable publications at bargain prices. Thus Fr Nadson bought a copy of "Historyia Bielarusi" by V. Lastouski of 1910, the first history of Belarus in Belarusian, with pages still uncut, for 5 German Marks (about 3 dollars). Another source of pre-war books were Belarusian emigrés in different countries. Many of them when leaving Belarus had taken some books with them. As they were getting older, they were willing to donate those books to the Library. Bishop Sipovich and Fr Nadson kept it always in mind during their travels. In this way the Library's holdings had been enriched by hundreds of publications, most of which were not found in any other libraries in the West.

Early printed books were the most difficult to find. Bishop Sipovich and Fr Nadson began to watch out for book auctions. In February 1972 they were lucky to purchase at an auction at Sotheby's *Novyi Zavet i Psalmy* (New Testament and Psalms), published in 1652 in the Kutseina Monastery in Orsha in Eastern Belarus. The importance of this publication lies in the fact that while the main text is in Church Slavonic, short summaries of each chapter or psalm, as well as the commentaries on the margins, are in Belarusian. Another valuable acquisition at an auction on 27 June 1972 was the manuscript of 1652 of the Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom in Church Slavonic with parallel Latin translation. Bishop Sipovich made this manuscript a subject of his special study. In 1978 he published its facsimile edition, together with the life of Theodore Skuminovich and copious liturgical notes.

The Library named in honour of the first Belarusian printer Francis Skaryna did not possess even a single original copy of his editions. It was therefore not surprising that the news about the impending sale by auction on 28 November to 1 December 1975 at Monte Carlo of a fragment of Skaryna's Book of Kings (Prague 1518) caused great excitement among Belarusians in London. Bishop Sipovich appealed for funds, and Fr Nadson was despatched to Monte Carlo with strict orders not to come back without Skaryna... He came back late at night on Monday 1 December carrying the precious fragment of Skaryna's Bible, which he acquired after successful bidding against a representative of the Soviet Academy of Sciences from Moscow. The fragment consisted of two sheets (8 pages) which were printed but never bound in the book, which makes them still more interesting. Fr Nadson brought with him also a dozen other valuable books from the 17th and 18th centuries, including two editions of the Suprasl Greek-Catholic Basilian monastery: *Litourgicon* of 1695 and *Sobranie pripadkov* of 1722, which may be considered the first book of moral and pastoral theology in Belarusian for Greek Catholic priests. The first of these books, which had belonged to the Basilian monastery of Bytsen in Western Belarus, is of considerable interest because in its structure it reminds one very much of the Roman Missal and thus is one of the early examples of Latin influence of the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus. The second book bears the autograph of Theodore Vislotski who in 1800-1801 was the first and only bishop of the short-lived Suprasl diocese, established by Pope Pius VI when Suprasl fell under Prussian rule. Thus the books were not only bibliographical rarities, but also fragments of Belarusian church

history. Another important acquisition was a copy of the "Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" of 1588. The Statute was the code of civil and criminal law for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. It was written in Belarusian, the official language of that country. After Skaryna it is considered to be the most important monument of early Belarusian printing. The book was given to the Library on 22 November 1973 by Mr and Mrs L. Halak who during the war, at the risk of their own lives, had saved it from being confiscated by Germans. After the war they emigrated to the United States and took the book with them. They had never considered it to be their personal property but a part of the Belarusian national heritage. After hearing about the Francis Skaryna Library, and having made the necessary inquiries, they decided that this was the place where the "Statute" should be.

The autographs of works of the greatest Belarusian poets, Ianka Kupala, including his famous poem "Kurhan" (The Burial Mound), written in 1910, and Iakub Kolas occupy pride of the place in the Library’s manuscript collection which contains documents going back to the 15th century.

Bishop Sipovich understood the value of original documents and encouraged individuals and organisations to deposit their archives in the Francis Skaryna Library. He was also tireless in searching for old manuscripts and documents. Thanks to his efforts the Library’s archives contain much hitherto unknown material which still awaits its historian. Documents relating to the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus go back to the 18th century. Of particular interest are numerous 20th century documents from the period before the Second World War. The private archives of Belarusian priests deserve a special mention. The letters of Fathers Talochka, Kulak, Shutovich and others shed much light on the religious situation in Western Belarus before 1939. So too do the archives of Fathers Haroshka, Tatarynovich and Hermanovich which in addition cover much of the post-war period in emigration, as do those of Fathers Salaviej, Francis Charniauski and Thomas Padziava. Bishop Sipovich deposited his own extensive archives in the library during his lifetime, thus indicating that he wanted them to be part of the Belarusian national heritage.

Bishop Sipovich often repeated that the Francis Skaryna Library belonged to the Belarusian people and not to any organisation or institution. To secure its independence, in 1979 it became a Charitable Trust, governed by a board of trustees, consisting of representatives of Belarusian community and English scholars specialising in Belarusian studies. Bishop Sipovich insisted that Father John Piekarski of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church should also be made a trustee, thus underlining the national character of the library.

The day after the opening of the Library, on Sunday 16 May, Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "God in his goodness helped us to achieve a great things: the founding of our own library and museum. This is most necessary, if we want others to know and appreciate us, and also that we ourselves may know better our history, language, art etc. The Belarusian tree, if it wants to bear fruit, must have deep roots. All sorts of small manifestations, cheap publications, ultra-patriotic noise will pass away with the first breath of wind and will be forgotten by all. That is why, despite many difficulties, we must build a lasting all-national home. God, do not cease to help us!".

During the last ten years of his life, with his health failing, Bishop Sipovich saw many of his earlier hopes unfulfilled – the passing away of many priests with no one to take their place, the failure to establish Apostolic administration in Belarus, and his vanishing dream of the "New Druia" in London. In these circumstances the

Francis Skaryna Library was particularly dear to him: no effort was too great where it was concerned. Bishop Sipovich chose one of the rooms in the library as his study, and spent there every moment free from his other duties. It was his greatest pleasure to show proudly to visitors the treasures of Belarusian culture held by the library.

Of all the Bishop Sipovich's projects the Francis Skaryna Library has proved to be the most enduring. It stands today as a monument of one man's love for his country and people, which years of separation could not weaken.

## 17. Marians and others

There were two institutions at Marian House. One of them was the religious house (or monastery) of the Belarusian Marian Fathers. This was canonically established in 1962 by the Superior General of the Marian Congregation after having obtained permission from the Archbishop of Westminster. In 1969 the Belarusian Marian community consisted of four priests: Fr Leo Haroshka, Joseph Hermanovich, Felix Zhurnia and Thomas Padziava. The Superior was Fr Haroshka. Bishop Sipovich was resident at Marian House but had no function in it. Father Zhurnia belonged to the Roman rite.

The other institution was the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine rite in England, established in 1947 by the Oriental Congregation with the agreement of the Archbishop of Westminster. Its first rector was Father Sipovich. From 1960 to 1970 the rector was Fr L. Haroshka. Apart from him, the priests of the Mission were Fr J. Hermanovich, T. Padziava and two non-Marian priests, Fr A. Nadson and R. Tamushanski. Fr Zhurnia, being of the Roman rite, did not belong to the Mission.

After the departure of Fr Haroshka in 1970, Fr Hermanovich became the Superior of the Marian community; in 1974 he was replaced by Fr Zhurnia. Bishop Sipovich assumed the duties of Rector of the Mission, with Fr Nadson as his assistant.

Thus the two institutions, even if they worked closely together, were quite distinct. On the whole cooperation was good, but there was always a feeling that the Marian Fathers would prefer to have the Mission and all its activities in their hands. This was expressed for the first time in 1962 by Fr S. Skutans, a Latvian, who was then Superior General. During his canonical visit he said about the St Cyril’s boarding house for boys that "it seems to be more opportune that the Marians themselves should assume the direction of the boarding house in their own hands not only in name, but also in fact". This was repeated by Bishop Sipovich in 1965, and in 1971 by his successor, Fr Joseph Sielski, a Pole, who added that "for this end another Marian priest, – at least one and younger, – is needed". During his next canonical visit in 1974 he wrote that "the problem of the ‘future’ of the ‘Marian’ aspect of this Mission and its varied apostolate is a preoccupying one". What he meant was that, because of diminishing numbers and advanced age, there was the danger that the Marians would lose control of the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine Rite in England. The underlying feeling was that the Mission was and should remain firmly in the hands of the Marian Fathers. In Sielski’s report of his visit on 23 March 1971, the two non-Marian priests, A. Nadson and R. Tamushanski were described as being "assigned (adscripti)" to the "London House II" (as distinct from the Lithuanian Marian community’s "London House I"). Of course, the non-Marian priests did not see it the same way, and were not even aware of being "assigned" to any "House", its location and number being immaterial. A delicate situation arose when the Superior General wanted to "visit canonically" their work. Bishop Sipovich, clearly embarrassed, told Father Nadson that the Superior General would like to "talk" with him. To help the Bishop in his difficulty Father Nadson agreed to see Father Sielski. The meeting took place in Fr Nadson’s study at St Peter’s House.

As has been already mentioned, the Oriental Congregation in 1960 gave Bishop Sipovich, as Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians, £10000 for the purchase of the property at 41 Holden Road for the Belarusian Catholic Mission. It became St Cyril’s House boarding school for boys. Father S. Skutans, the Superior General, in his report of the canonical visit, dated 28 August 1962 wrote: "To the Belarusian Mission,

under the direction of Rev. Fr Leo Haroshka, belongs also the boarding house for boys under the protection of St Cyril of Turau. This house is the property of the Sacred Congregation for the Eastern Churches, but in the documents is in the name of His Exc. Fr Ceslaus Sipovich". On 27 March 1965 Bishop Sipovich, who in his capacity as Superior General of the Marian Fathers, made the canonical visit, wrote: "The boarding house for boys consists of two separate buildings, 39 and 41 Holden Road, London N.12, in the vicinity of Marian House; one of these was purchased this very month with a loan of £10710-1-6 from the Westminster Curia. Both houses for boys have been acquired with money collected or borrowed by the undersigned (i.e. Sipovich – *A.N.*). This money does not belong to the Marians, but was given for the disposition to the undersigned in his capacity as Apostolic Visitor. Hence both houses, in which Belarusian boys now live, are not the property of the Marian Fathers (my emphasis – *A.N.*), although they may serve to expand the work of the Marians". With the correction that the money for 41 Holden Road was not "collected or borrowed" but given by the Oriental Congregation, the above statement makes the things quite clear.

The next canonical visit, also by Bishop Sipovich, took place in 1968. Among the "decrees (decreta)" in his official report of the visit, dated 7 March 1968, there is the following: "Having considered everything and obtained the opinion from those who are interested, I state and decree the house which bears the name of St Cyril of Turau, 41 Holden Avenue, Finchley, London N.12, together with the garden, garage and all furniture which is in it or which may be acquired later, to be the property of Belarusian Marians in the same way as 'Marian House' with all legal and practical effects"[44]. There followed certain dispositions for the time that the boys' boarding house continued to exist.

Bishop Sipovich made this decision in his capacity as Superior General of the Marian Fathers. It was recorded in the official document entitled "Visitatio canonica Domus Londinensis II (Alboruthenae) Marian House, Holden Ave., London, N.12, diebus 2-7 Martii 1968 peracta (Canonical visit of the London House II (Belarusian), Marian House, Holden Avenue, London, N.12, made on 2-7 March 1968)". At the end of the document there is the signature, "Ceslaus Sipovi≠c, Eppus tit. Mariamitanus, Sup. Generalis", and the official round seal with the inscription: "Superior Generalis Congregationis CC. RR. Marianorum".

Thus the Superior General of Marian Fathers decided about the ownership of the property which was not theirs. It was also not clear who were those interested persons, whose opinion Bishop Sipovich asked before making his decision. Fathers Nadson and Tamushanski were most definitely not among them.

Bishop Sipovich gave the following justification for his action: "I make this decision or decree on the basis of the letter of the Illustrious Gentleman A. Rivers (Illustrissimi Domini A. Rivers), secretary of the financial affairs of the Westminster Archdiocese, written to me on 11 September 1963, in which it is said: '...I formally confirm that St Cyril's House, 41 Holden Road, Finchley, N.12, which you purchased and paid for in January 1961, is registered in the name of the Westminster Roman Catholic Diocese Trustee. This is a Diocesan Trustee Corporation which is incorporated to act as Trustee on behalf of any charity. It holds the property on your

---

[44] "Omnibus consideratis consilioque accepto ab illis quorum interest hoc statuo ac decerno, ut domus sub nomine Sancti Cirilli Turoviensis ad plateam 41 Holden Avenue, Finchley, London N.12, simul cum horto, 'garage' et inventario, quod habet vel in futuro acquisiverit, sit proprietas Marianorum Alboruthenorum simul ac 'Marian House' cum omnibus effectibus iuridicis et practicis".

behalf and at any time, on your instructions, the property would be transferred to any person whom you may direct...'".

The Westminster Diocese Trustee is a legal custodian for religious charities, funds and institutions in that diocese. It does not act on its own initiative but on instruction of the actual owners, very much in the same way as a bank acts on the instructions of the client who has an account in it. Thus the letter of the diocesan Financial Secretary did not give Bishop Sipovich any powers with regard to St Cyril's House: it assumed that he already had them. As a legal basis for his decision it was worthless.

Bishop Sipovich's "decree" was never made public, and its only record is in the Marian books which are not accessible to outsiders. But the news leaked out, with predictable effect on the non-Marian priests of the Belarusian Mission. They suddenly discovered that they were only guests in what they considered to be their home. The Marian Fathers, on the other hand, seemed to be in no doubt about the legality of Bishop Sipovich's action. On 20 February 1977, the then Superior General, Father Joseph Sielski, in his report of the canonical visit wrote: "The Main Bldg, which houses the religious community and the Byzantine-Slavonic Chapel, and St Cyril House are the property of the Congregation of Marian Fathers". The Mission received in this report a new, hitherto unknown name: "Missio Mariana et Alboruthena" (Marian and Belarusian Mission)!...

Incidentally, the same Father Sielski, after visiting the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library on 19 February 1977, wrote in the library visitors' book: "May God bless the work of Marian Fathers and this apostolate among the White Russian people". Talk about a one-track mind!

There was a serious purpose behind the Bishop Sipovich's "decree", unlawful as it was, namely to ensure the continuous existence of the Belarusian Marian community, for which St Cyril's House would serve as a material basis (e.g. by renting out rooms and thus generating continuous income). It was assumed as a matter of course that the Belarusian Catholic Mission in London would be always in the hands of the Marian Congregation. St Peter's House at 39 Holden Road would remain the property of the Mission for the use of non-Marian priests. According to the Bishop's "decree", "The present Reverend Rector of this Mission, or his successor, will be able to dispose freely of this house according to the needs of the Mission (Rev.mus Rector laudatae Missionis actualis vel eius successor de eadem domo iuxta Missionis necessitates disponere libere poterit)". The Rector of the Mission would be, of course, a Marian... The possibility that there might come the time when there would be no Belarusian Marian left, or that the rector of the Mission would be a non-Marian, was apparently not even considered.

On 22 October 1977 Bishop Sipovich wrote his "last will", in which he repeated his earlier dispositions about the houses. Since the houses were not his private property, the "will" had no legal value and at most could be taken as an indication of his wishes.

The sad thing was that even at this late stage Bishop Sipovich could not see the writing on the wall. In 1977 the Belarusian Marian community was practically finished. Fr Padziava died in 1975, followed two years later by Fr Haroshka. Fr Zhurnia, 64 and practically blind, could not do much. Moreover he belonged to the Roman rite. Fr Hermanovich was 87 and retired. Bishop Sipovich in an attempt to ensure the continuation of the Marian community accepted as candidate a German student who had tried his luck already in two seminaries. He was a pleasant enough young man – but he suffered from an allergy to work. He did not stay long. There was also a young Marian Roman-rite priest from Poland, Anthony Los' Jnr, nephew of

Father Anthony Los' snr. He spoke good Belarusian, but declared that he was a Pole and not interested in work among Belarusians or in the Byzantine rite. After a short time he left to join the Polish Marian community. But even if those two young men had stayed, was this the "New Druia" of Bishop Sipovich's dreams?

The aim of the Church is to spread the Kingdom of God among men. This does not make her representatives experts in other branches of human activity, or exempt them from observing the law. Many misunderstandings would have been avoided if the Church authorities had kept this in mind. In the case of Bishop Sipovich, while not doubting his good intentions, one cannot help feeling that he would have profited from expert legal advice in certain matters. Then there is the question of secrecy. Every organisation has its secrets. However, making secret decisions in matters which are not within the competence of an organisation, and affect people who do not belong to it, creates an unhealthy atmosphere and leads to the suspicion, whether justified or not, of underhand dealing.

## 18. Ecumenism Belarusian Style

The year 1969 saw Bishop Sipovich back in London, where twenty two years earlier as a young priest he had started his pastoral work. Now that he was no longer Superior Genaral of the Marian Fathers, he could dedicate himself fully to his duties as Apostolic Visitor for Belarusians. Marian House was the obvious choice for his place of permanent residence.

Marian House, together with St Cyril's and St Peter's Houses, formed a unique Belarusian religious complex. Officially it was the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine rite in England, but because of its activities, such as a boarding house for boys, the journal *Bozhym shliakham* etc., it became known among the Belarusian community throughout the world. Alongside the pastoral duties which had been and always remained their chief concern, some priests of the Mission were engaged in scholarly work and in the cultural activities of the Belarusian community. The Association of Belarusians in Great Britain and the Anglo-Belarusian Society used regularily the conference room at St Peter's House for their meetings and lectures. Sometimes major events took place, such as the literary evening in 1972 to mark 90 years from the birth of Belarusian greatest poets, Ianka Kupala and Iakub Kolas, with poetry reading in Belarusian and in Vera Rich's English translation; a conference on 1976 on the Mediaeval culture in Eastern Europe on 6 March 1976; or launch on 21 May 1977 of Professor Arnold McMillin's *A History of Byelorussian Literature*, the first work on the subject in the English language.From the very beginning the Francis Skaryna Library attracted scholars in the field of East European history and Slavic culture from all over the world. And of course there were hundreds of Belarusian visitors from all over the world, among them writers and poets, scholars, literary critics and artists.

Bishop Sipovich and the priests of the Mission, being Belarusians, were genuinely interested in the preservation and development of Belarusian culture. But their involvement in the Belarusian cultural activities also had a pastoral aspect. The majority of Belarusians were Orthodox, and many of them viewed the Belarusian Greek Catholics with suspicion. This was due to a century-long propaganda campaign by the Russians who, after suppressing by force in 1839 the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus, did their best to convince the Orthodox Belarusians that this Church was an intrigue, devised by the Poles and the Vatican in order to "enslave" them. The effects of this propaganda have survived many political changes and can be felt even today among certain groups of Orthodox Belarusians, whom one cannot accuse of pro-Russian sympathies. In these circumstances the presence of the Greek Catholics in the Belarusian national and cultural life assumes particular significance.

Bishop Sipovich and the other Greek Catholic priests in London did much to overcome the old prejudices and to establish relations with Orthodox Belarusians based on mutual respect and understanding. In fact some of their best friends were Orthodox. An interesting example was Victor Astrouski, son of the President of the Belarusian Central Rada (Council), Radaslau Astrouski. He was a keen collector of old maps and author of a book entitled "The Ancient Names and Early Cartography of Byelorussia" (London 1971). At the same time he published a number of scurrilous pamphlets against Catholics and the Belarusian Catholic Mission in London. Persuaded by a friend to go and see the collection of old maps at the Francis Skaryna Library, he came very much on his guard and full of suspicions... and went away a friend. Victor died on 31 August 1975. In his will he left all his books and maps to the Francis Skaryna Library. During his funeral service the Orthodox priest asked Bishop Sipovich to read the lesson.

On 29 August 1971 Archbishop Andrew Kryt of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church came from the United States on a canonical visit to the Belarusian Orthodox communities in England. He first went to Bradford where he ordained as a priest Fr John Piakarski (who later became one of the trustees of the Francis Skaryna Library), then visited Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham. On 25 September the Archbishop arrived in London and in the evening paid a visit to Marian House. He and Bishop Sipovich had known each other since the time when they were both priests working in England, one in Bradford and the other in London. The visit started in the chapel, where Archbishop Andrew at the altar, with the Royal Door open, blessed all present – priests, boys of St Cyril's House, and a few members of the London Belarusian Community, – and was greeted by Bishop Sipovich. Then all went to supper, at which Bishop Sipovich greeted again Archbishop Andrew and congratulated the newly ordained Father Piakarski. On the following day, a Sunday, Archbishop Andrew celebrated Pontifical Liturgy in a church near the Belarusian House at Islington. The boys from St Cyril's House, under the direction of Guy Picarda sang during the Liturgy. During the days that followed until the end of his stay in London, Archbishop Andrew was a regular visitor at the Francis Skaryna Library and partook of meals together with the priests and boys at St Cyril's House. Bishop Sipovich's comment at the end of the visit was: "Thanks be to God! It is better to pray together than to quarrel".

A report, signed "Observer", describing Archbishop Andrew's visit to England appeared in the November issue of the newspaper *Belarus* in New York[45]. It was a lengthy and detailed report, in which however one detail was missing, namely the Archbishop's visit to Marian House and the Francis Skaryna Library. Just before Christmas Bishop Sipovich received a letter, dated 10 December, from Archbishop Andrew, in which he wrote: "Most probably you have already received *Belarus* and, having read the correspondence about my canonical visit, are annoyed, because there was no mention of my visit to you. I can tell you with a clear conscience that in that article, in the report of my stay in London, there was a great deal written about you, and especially about the Skaryna Library. However the editors and our (political) leaders, when they saw it, raised the alarm, that once more we were giving arguments for the "expatriates" ("zarubiezhniki") and their like to use against us. Therefore I was forced to write to them telling them to omit a large part (of the article). I beg you not to be angry with me, because this did not depend on me. Anyway, you know well the circumstances in which we live". This was an interesting example of the political pressure on the Belarusian Orthodox Church. As an attempt at censorship it was quite useless, because *Bozhym Shliakham* (No.5, London, October-December 1971, pp.13-14) quite independently published a short account of the visit, together with a group photo of Archbishop Andrew, Bishop Sipovich and all Belarusian Greek Catholic priests standing outside the Francis Skaryna Library.

Bishop Sipovich answered on 25 February 1972: "Thank you very much for the explanation why there was no mention in *Belarus* of your visit to Marian House and the Library. It is sad but true! Our lay leaders think that they know better what to do than the priests and bishops. Perhaps sometimes they are right, but in most cases they are wrong. In the name of Christ we must not be afraid of the truth. Your visit to the Belarusian Orthodox communities in England was very useful. The Catholics are also pleased. As you must have seen here many prejudices have been long forgotten,

---

[45] Naziralnik, "Kananichnaia vizytacyia Uladyki Andreia u Anhielshchynie". *Belarus*, No.177, New York, Listapad 1971, p.5

while in the United States they still repeat ad nauseam the old stale arguments. Eventually the union of the Catholics and Orthodox must come, otherwise the words of Christ "That all may be one" will remain unfulfilled! Of course, it is not for us to know when it will come, but it is our duty to do everything in our power so that it may be soon. In the past the Catholics sinned greviously by forcing into their fold people of different faiths. Tsarist Russia did likewise. May God save us from similar times and methods. In our days people are mature enough to make up their own minds, and if Christians were free from various (external) pressures, they would unite much sooner".

The ecumenical spirit was not exactly in abundance among Belarusians. In 1972 Belarusians in Manchester acquired their own church. It was consecrated on Sunday 12 November by Archpriest Eugene Smarshchok who came from Belgium especially for this purpose. On his way back he stopped for a few days in London at Marian House and, as Bishop Sipovich noted in his diary, "tried to explain... why Fr J. Ababurka ‘did not dare’ to invite the Bishop or some other Catholic to the celebration in Manchester. He said that Father Ababurka felt very badly about it, but his faithful...".

Two years earlier, on 24 November 1970 another Belarusian Orthodox bishop, Mikalay from Toronto, wrote to Bishop Sipovich, using throughout the majestic form "we" instead of "I": "All the time we are praying to God, that He in His great mercy may help the Roman Catholic Church to come back to the Orthodox Christian Faith. And we rejoice in every step which the Roman Catholic Church makes towards prayerful union with the Universal Orthodox Church of Christ. Now there is no longer need to force one’s way in, because Athenagoras I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, has opened wide the door for the Roman Church. Whether the pastors of the Roman Catholic Church will listen to the voice of God, is entirely up to them".

There is no record of Bishop Sipovich’s answer. However, when in summer 1979 Bishop Mikalay visited London, he was received with customary warmth, and no mention was made of his letter. On 24 July there was a reception in his honour at St Peter’s House. There were about 60 persons present. Bishop Mikalay was greeted by the chairman of the Belarusian Association, Jan Michaluk, and Bishop Sipovich who in his diary made the following entry: "I said that this meeting of two bishops, one Catholic and one Orthodox, who have found a common language in their work for their people, was an historical event". Incidentally Bishop Mikalay was one of the first to attempt the translation of liturgical texts into Belarusian. At heart he was a good and generous man, although somewhat narrow in his outlook.

Bishop Sipovich desired the union of Christians, especially Catholics and Orthodox, with all his heart. But the union should be for the right reasons, free from any external pressure, whether physical or moral, and the methods used should be compatible with respect for human dignity. In particular he found so-called "proselytism", i.e. "making converts" at all costs, without paying much attention to the reasons why someone should want to change his or her religious allegiance, unacceptable. There were times in his pastoral experience when these principles were put to the test.

On Sunday 14 May 1972 Bishop Sipovich had a visitor from New York. He was Kastus Miarlak, a man quite active in the life of the Belarusian community. For some reasons he was in conflict with the authorities of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Rather than trying to resolve the misunderstanding, he decided with the help of his supporters to build his own church, and even found a priest willing to serve in it. Here is what Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "After lunch

he (i.e. Miarlak – *A.N.*) wanted to speak to me in private. I had not the slightest idea what was all this about. It turned out that, in case Father Koush refused to take the parish where they now are building the new church (they have spent $65000 already), the Orthodox Belarusians are prepared to ask me to take over that parish. I said that this was impossible and they should find an Orthodox priest. Whatever the outcome may be in the future, this was for me a great surprise. The Orthodox, unable to agree among themselves, are ready to ask the Uniates, at whom not so long ago they were slinging mud! But such a thing is possible only where the Orthodox are not only Belarusians conscious of their ethnic identity, but also patriots".

Bishop Sipovich was not in a hurry to accept any person who expressed a wish to become a Catholic. Thus when in 1975 someone approached him with such request, he wrote in his diary on 9 October: "I don't know what caused this request, perhaps dissatisfaction with Bishop Mikalay. Full acceptance of the Catholic faith is an act of the grace of God and result of hard work on the part of the person concerned". However, he had no hesitation to act if he was convinced that this was what was required for this person's spiritual good. In the spring of 1970 in Paris Mikola Abramtchyk, President of the Council of the Belarusian National Republic in Exile, was dying of cancer. He was a major Belarusain political figure who for nearly thirty years had championed the cause of Belarusian political independence. He was born Orthodox. Bishop Sipovich went to see him early in May and stayed with him for a few days. Here is what he wrote in his diary on 5 May: "Beautiful day. Again I speak with the President. He says that he firmly believes in God and the immortality of the soul. He makes his confession. Afterwards I give him the sacrament of Extreme Unction. He receives everything with great humility and piety. In fact Mr M. Abramtchyk considers himself to be an Uniate and says that his father was also... The few days which I passed together with Abramtchyk will remain in my memory forever... I prayed to God that He may help me to help Abramtchyk spiritually. He suffers terrible pains. Hence the nervous outbursts".

Abramtchyk died on 29 May. Both Bishop Sipovich and the Orthodox priest from Belgium, Father Eugene Smarshchok atended his funeral on 4 June. Bishop Sipovich wrote: "Mrs Abramtchyk announced: 'Mikola was Orthodox and I wish him to be buried by the Orthodox priest'. I kept quiet. Father Smarshchok said: 'The Bishop and I know what to do and how to do it'... The fact remains that Abramtchyk did not consider himself Orthodox, perhaps only nominally. He had great respect for all Belarusian priests. The Union was for him the Belarusian national religion".

In Autumn 1975 Bishop Sipovich was in the United States. He was asked by some Belarusians to conduct a memorial service at the Belarusian cemetery in New Brunswick, New Jersey, at the Heroes Memorial in honour of all Belarusians who had died for their country or were victims of persecution. The Bishop agreed. On 2 October in Cleveland he paid a visit on Metropolitan Andrew Kryt , the head of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Here is what he wrote in his diary: "In the conversation with the Metropolitan I heard the following statement: 'I get many telephone calls in which people ask me why Bishop Sipovich wants to bless the Heroes' Memorial at the New Brunswick cemetary again, when it was already blessed by me?' I did not plan to talk about this with the Metropolitan. When Mr S. Hutyrchyk asked me to pray at the Memorial, I readily agreed, convinced that all formalities were settled by the organisers. And I had no intention to ask anybody's permission to pray at the Belarusian national memorial at the Belarusian cemetery. However, perhaps it was as well that the Metroplitan raised the matter. I told him that

I had no intention to bless again the memorial which had been already blessed; and asked the Metropolitan to explain how things really stood with those who telephoned him". The service took place on 5 October. Bishop wrote in his diary: "At the start I said that I go wherever I am asked by Belarusians, and there had never been a case of Belarusians making any difficulties. Then I told them for whom we would pray... and expanded my meaning taking as a motto Goethe's 'Die Marmoren sprechen' (The Marble speaks). The Heroes' Memorial is the symbol of our sufferings and our glory. But it must be a living symbol: that we may know our past and look forward into the future... After the prayers... a reception in the basement of the (Orthodox – *A.N.*) church... All speeches are calm, full of good will towards me... Uladzimir Rusak remembers a scene from the life in German refugee camps, when the Belarusian Orthodox priest Father Stsiapanau and (Greek Catholic – *A.N.*) Father Michael Maskalik embraced each other. He adds: 'Something similar might have happened today'. This was an allusion to the fact that no Orthodox priest was present at the cemetery or in the hall. This also made me sad... In conclusion I thanked everybody and begged that my visit might not be the cause of new discord. 'Blessed are the peacemakers'... At the cemetery and in the hall I felt the goodness of our people... If they had wiser priests, the union would come naturally... In the meantime it is necessary with God's help patiently and tactfully persist to plough the first furrow".

In the 1970s Marian House, together with the Francis Skaryna Library and the two other houses became an important Belarusian religious and cultural centre. Apart from purely religious functions, many cultural events took place there, among them annual courses of lectures on Belarusian culture, organised by the Anglo-Belarusian Society.

The conference hall at St Peter's House, 39 Holden Road, became the venue of practically all Belarusian events in London. The Association of Belarusians in Great Britain held its annual general meetings there, as well as meetings to mark the events of national importance, such as Independence day on 25 March. In 1979 this day fell on a Sunday. The organisers, without much thought, fixed the meeting for 4 p.m., with the results that many people did not come to church in the morning. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "There are very few people in the chapel. My soul is sad, because this is the feast of the Mother of God and our national feast. The reason why some people did not come to the Liturgy was the meeting and reception at St Peter's House, which was fixed for 4 p.m. An idea came to me to invite everyone before the beginning of the meeting to the chapel and say a short prayer for Belarus. I consulted Mr J. Michaluk, J. Siaukovich and Fr Piakarski (the Orthodox priest). They all agreed. We all gathered in the chapel, sang 'Our Father' and 'O, God Almighty'... At the meeting I made a speech. I touched on three subjects: 1. Today's feast of the Annunciation; 2. The meaning of our national feast; 3. Mother's day. Perhaps I spoke too long... In fact I tried to 'make up' at the meeting what I could not do in the chapel because of the absence of people. How often and how painfully we feel our religious separation! All those people are good and kind, but one cannot direct them, because among us there exist divisions not of a national, but of a religious nature. God, give us unity!"

Late in the night on 1 August 1979 there suddenly appeared at the doorstep of Marian House two young people. They proved to be Orthodox seminarians from Warsaw. Both were Belarusians from the ethnically Belarusian Bialystok region, which remained after the Second World War under Polish rule. After consultation with Fr Nadson, Bishop Sipovich decided to give the two hospitality and pay for them

to take an English language course. They stayed for six weeks and made an excellent impression on everybody. They both eventually became Orthodox priests. Bishop Sipovich was willing to invite other Belarusian Orthodox seminarians for the next summer, but the head of the Orthodox Church in Poland, Metropolitan Basil (who was himself a Belarusian) was not in favour.

On 19 August 1979 the Belarusian young people organised a picnic in the Marian House garden, to which the older people were also invited. One of them, an Orthodox, said to Bishop Sipovich: "We should like the Pope to make you, My Lord, an archbishop or even cardinal, but we don't know how to ask and don't want to make a mistake... Can you give us advice?". The Bishop declined to give any advice but made a note in his diary: "Now the attitude of all Orthodox Belarusians towards me is much better than what it was when I started my work here in Great Britain".

Bishop Sipovich was fully aware that the Belarusian community in general was not quite ready for ecumenical dialogue. That is why he took extra care always to be tactful and discreet in his relations with the Orthodox, in particular when dealing with individual cases involving the question of faith. Rather than trying to gain some cheap temporary advantage, he was guided by the age-honoured rule: "Salus animarum suprema lex (salvation of the souls is the supreme law)".

## 19. The Heavy Bishop's Mitre

Bishop Sipovich's powers as Apostolic Visitor to Belarusians of the Byzantine rite outside Belarus were somewhat restricted. However he was the first and only Belarusian Catholic bishop in nearly one and a half centuries. Because of this he felt a moral responsibility for all Belarusian Catholics irrespective of their rite, in or outside Belarus. The Belarusian Catholics on their part, looked to Bishop Sipovich as their spiritual leader and expected from him perhaps more than he could deliver. Thus his task was not an easy one, and was not made easier when he was elected to the post of Superior General of Marian Fathers, which was in itself a full-time job. This double burden must have put a considerable strain on him, as a result of which his health deteriorated. He tried not to show it, but those who knew him well could see the worrying signs, which became worse as time progressed. What remained unchanged was his energy and enthusiasm.

Back in London Bishop Sipovich found himself in the centre of a not very numerous but lively Belarusian community, something which he had missed in Rome. Free from the burden of responsibility for the Marian Congregation, it did not take him much time to throw himself headlong into Belarusian affairs. Thus only a few weeks after his arrival from Rome he embarked on the project of his lifetime, namely the founding of a Belarusian library in London.

Bishop Sipovich always tried to be present at all Belarusian functions – meetings, lectures, conferences, literary evenings – which usually were held at the conference hall at St Peter's House, or in the Francis Skaryna Library. He liked to play host to visitors from all over the world – priests, Belarusians from the United States or Australia on a tourist visit in London, or scholars coming to work in the Library. Among the visitors there were also Belarusians from Poland and from Soviet Belarus. For the latter, who had been conditioned to identify "Catholic" with "Polish" and "Orthodox" with "Russian", the existence of a Belarusian Greek Catholic Church and a Belarusian Catholic Bishop in London was a revelation. For obvious reasons they preferred to keep their visit quiet.

One of the most distinguished visitors was Cardinal Joseph Slipyi, Archbishop Major of the Ukrainians, who came on 12 May 1970. He celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the chapel of St Peter and Paul at Marian House in concelebration with bishops Augustine Hornyak, the Exarch of the Ukrainians in Great Britain, and Ceslaus Sipovich. During the Liturgy he gave a sermon in which he appealed to Belarusians to cherish and preserve their religious and national heritage. After the Liturgy Cardinal Slipyi visited Marian House, St Cyril's House and the library in which building and decorating work was in progress.

Bishop Sipovich had known Archbishop Slipyi since 1963 when the latter was released from Soviet prison. He had a sincere and deep respect for him, but did not necessarily agree with all his ideas. In particular he was critical about the idea of a Ukrainian, or Kiev-Halych, Patriarchate, which in the minds of those who proposed it should include Ukraine and Belarus on the grounds that both these countries in the past had formed one ecclesiastical Metropolitan province of Kiev. Not all Ukrainian bishops were in favour of the patriarchate. One of them was Bishop Augustine Hornyak, the Exarch of the Ukrainians in Great Britain who had serious reservations about it. On 30 November 1971 he showed Bishop Sipovich, who was his guest at dinner, copies of letters from the Oriental Congregation and the Holy Father himself, in which the petition for the establishment of the Ukrainian Patriarchate was politely but firmly refused on canonical, pastoral and ecumenical grounds.

On 2 June 1972 Cardinal Slipyi, despite the negative answer of the Holy See, wrote to Bishop Sipovich the following short letter: "On the basis of history I wish to ask you, whether you wish or not to belong to our Patriarchate, whose definitive constitution we are now in the course of formulating, obviously preserving your own autonomy? I look forward to your quick kind answer".

On 30 June Bishop Sipovich sent a long answer, in which among other things he said: "In your short letter you have raised an important problem of the Belarusian Catholic Church belonging to the Ukrainian Patriarchate. Until now I had no opportunity to express my views about the Ukrainian Patriarchate... I thought that it was unseemly for a Belarusian bishop to interfere in strictly internal affairs of the Ukrainian Church. With regard to a Belarusian patriarchate – and I can talk about no other, – I can express my personal view which probably will not differ from that of the rest of Belarusian Catholic clergy in emigration. A Belarusian Patriarchate is possible only on the following conditions:

1. When there will be religious unity among the Belarusian nation, and when it, or at least its greater part, will recognise the Successor of St Peter as its Head.

2. The question of a Belarusian Patriarchate is unrealistic in exile. It can be resolved in Belarus, when the appropriate circumstances arise.

3. The historical linkage of Belarusians and Ukrainians in one Metropolitan province of Kiev is not of divine institution; therefore under the new changed circumstances it is impossible to preserve the old organisational structure; Christ Himself advises against pouring new wine into old wine-skins.

4. The question of a Belarusian Patriarchate can be only decided either by the Ecumenical Council or by the Holy See.

In view of what has been said... my humble request is... that in the proposed constitution of the Ukrainian Patriarchate no mention should be made of a Belarusian Patriarchate".

It seems that Bishop Sipovich deliberately "misunderstood" the meaning of Cardinal Slipyi's letter and chose to talk about a hypothetical Belarusian patriarchate, instead of the proposed Ukrainian one.

If there was any body of the faithful who deserved to be honoured, it was without any doubt the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church for their heroic stand in defence of their faith. Nonetheless the idea of the Ukrainian Patriarchate was controversial, not so much in itself, but because it was launched at the wrong time, when Ukraine was not free; and in the wrong place, i. e. in emigration and not in their native country. At the same time the position of Bishop Sipovich was basically "correct", because he had no mandate to commit the whole Belarusian church to such an important step as the establishment of a patriarchate, whether separately or jointly with the Ukrainians. The somewhat peremptory and "ultramontane" tone of his letter was perhaps a reaction to the Cardinal Slipyi's curt note requiring a "yes" or "no" answer. Sadly after this the relations between the two became noticeably cool.

One of the difficulties of the Belarusian priests working in different countries was their isolation. One way to remedy this, at least in part, were the regular visits of the Apostolic Visitor, which, according with the instruction of the Oriental Congregation of 1960, was one of his duties. During his term as Superior General of the Marian Fathers, Bishop Sipovich tried to combine his travels on the business of the Marian Congregation with meetings with local Belarusian communities. The Marian Fathers picked up the travel bills, thus their affairs took precedence on the principle that "he, who pays the piper, calls the tune". This was not very satisfactory from the Belarusian point of view, but under the circumstances it was the best Bishop

Sipovich could do. After 1969, relieved of the duties of Superior General of Marian Fathers, he could dedicate himself fully to Belarusian affairs. During the years 1970-1976 he made frequent visits to Germany, France and Belgium and also five long trips to the United States and Canada. Those were pastoral visits in the true sense of the word, consisting not only of official functions, but also visiting Belarusian families and attending to their problems, often going out of his way to go and see someone living alone far from other Belarusians. But whatever his American itinerary, it always included New York, Chicago and Toronto with their large Belarusian communities. Chicago was the Belarusian Greek Catholic centre, with the church of Christ the Redeemer and a parish with rich religious and cultural life. The parish priest was Father Uladzimier Tarasevitch O.S.B. In 1975 Bishop Sipovich conferred on him the honorary title of Archimandrite (abbot). Incidentally in 1976 Father Tarasevitch won general praise for his organisational abilities, which he showed during the World Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia, at which a large Belarusian group, headed by Bishop Sipovich, was present.

Another important way to keep in touch were through the reunions of priests. One of the recommendations at the memorable reunion in 1960 in Rome, which resulted in the Belarusians receiving their first bishop, was that similar reunions should take place regularly every few years. The second reunion was in 1961 at Koenigstein during the Congress "Kirche in Not", but it had the character of an informal meeting. The same may be said about the meeting in 1962 in Rome on the occasion of the World Pilgrimage of Emigrés. Then in 1963 Bishop Sipovich became "otherwise engaged". It was not till ten years later that the next reunion took place, on 2-6 August 1972 in London. On Tuesday 2 August Bishop Sipovich had a spiritual talk to the members. In it he drew attention to the place of the priest in the post-conciliar period, when laymen regained their rightful place in the affairs of the Church. He said: "The message of the priest, his mission, his responsibility, is the same as the message of the Church, to which it was entrusted by Christ. It is not political, economical or social, but religious". Then he continued: "The priest must lead the people to salvation, but the Church knows no other way to this goal, except through teaching (the Word of God) and administration of the holy sacraments. The word of God, proclaimed by the priest must lead to the sacraments which are the food of Christian life. The priest in his ministry is the centre of a church nucleus, which is variously called parish, mission, chaplaincy etc". He then went on to say more about the sacraments: "The mystical interior life in the Church, which comes through the sacraments, is not from men, but from God. There is no sense in receiving the Sacraments out of habit; still worse – without faith. Therefore they require good preparation from the Christian faithful, and unshakeable faith on the part of the priest". There are considerable difficulties created by the new situation: "Today the Church lets the faithful approach the altar, and to decide on many Church and related matters. One does not know why, but some priests have concluded from this that they should also try to be like all other people. But in what way? Not only in exterior appearance, but in their way of life, completely secularised. That was the beginning of the crisis among our brethren, especially in such weighty matters as celibacy and chastity. In all countries there is a crisis of vocations. There are considerable difficulties in relations between bishops and priests". He concludes: "The fact remains that there is a need of profound faith so that the priest can see an apostle in his bishop, and the bishop in the person of a priest can see his son, born by the imposition of his hands through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Also relations between priests without faith in their supernatural mission, without patience and love cannot serve as an

example to the faithful, and their apostolic work cannot bring abundant fruit". Having thus touched on the general problems in the Church, Bishop Sipovich went on to analyse their implications for Belarusians. These became the subject of discussion during the days that followed. First there was an exchange of experiences of work in different countries (England, Germany, United States). It was followed by discussion of the problems of pastoral work among Belarusians and their religious needs. Among the resolutions the most important were the necessity to renew effort to obtain a Belarusian Catholic Bishop in Belarus; the problem of priestly vocations and the possibility of the ordination of married men; the need for religious literature, and in particular the Bible and liturgical texts in the Belarusian language; the role of the religious press as means of keeping in touch with the faithful; the problem of closer cooperation, without closing one's eyes to the existing divisions, with the Orthodox Belarusians in the spirit of love and mutual respect; and greater involvement of the faithful in the affairs of the Church.

It was an important reunion, with great emphasis on pastoral matters. On the basis of its resolutions Bishop Sipovich wrote a memorandum to the Holy Father Paul VI and presented it at a private audience on 22 February 1973. One of the problems raised again was that of the Catholic Roman rite bishop in Belarus, to which the Holy Father said "Tutto riconsideremo di nuovo e lo faremo tutto ch'é possibile (we shall reconsider everything again and do everything possible)". Bishop Sipovich also raised the question of the pastoral care of Roman rite Belarusians outside Belarus. To this the Holy Father said: "Fate tutto come finora. Occupatevi di loro (Do everything as you have been doing till now. Take care of them)". Bishop Sipovich made the following comment in his diary: "The Holy Father said this so clearly, so that I understood beyond any doubt that he does not want to get involved in any formalities but simply wishes me to take care of them". It was thus an informal approval of what Bishop Sipovich had been doing all along.

Bishop Sipovich could not see Archbishop Casaroli, the "Foreign Secretary" of the Vatican, who was at that time in Czechoslovakia. He was the chief spokesman of the Vatican's "Ostpolitik". Unlike the era of Pope Pius XII and his uncompromising stand against communism, Paul VI tried to ease the lot of Catholics in the Communist countries by open means, through negotiations with the Communist authorities. In order not to anger the Communist authorities they kept quiet about certain things such as the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine, or the 1968 events in Czechoslovakia etc. This brought accusations from some quarters of Vatican pro-communist sympathies. The impression was strengthened by the fact that the Vatican achieved nothing, except some small concessions such as release of Cardinal Mindszenty in Hungary, while all the gain went to the Communist side who, while giving up nothing, appeared to get exactly what they wanted, namely "respectability". The following episode can serve as an example. On 7 March 1973 while waiting for an audience with the Secretary of State, Cardinal Villiot, Bishop Siopovich met Cardinal Doepfner of Berlin. The Bishop recorded in his diary: "He (Doepfner –*A.N.*) asks me: Are you satisfied with the activities of Archbishop Casaroli in the Soviet Union? I answer: Yes, because he is doing what he can. In his question I felt doubts and dissatisfaction with the trip of Mgr Casaroli to East Germany". A little later, in conversation with Cardinal Villiot, Bishop Sipovich said: "I remarked that usually people consider every trip of Archbishop Casaroli to the Soviet Union as a sign of the pro-Soviet policy of the Vatican. To this His Eminence replied: We strive to broaden and strengthen the already existing religious centres in the Soviet Union".

Incidentally, on 4 March, while in Rome, Bishop Sipovich made the following entry in his diary: "I had a talk with Fr Jakimowicz about Polish-Belarusian misunderstandings. He considers himself to be a Pole, speaks Belarusian, his father was from a Uniate family, was born in Hrodna district. He calls Fr Hermanovich a nationalist for his letter to Fr Chruscielewski (unfortunately unavailable – *A.N.*). I took this opportunity to say something about the attitude of certain Polish Marians towards Belarusians: they burned Belarusian religious books; did not let young (Belarusians – *A.N.*) to come to Rome to study; after the expulsion of the (Belarusian) Fathers from Druia tried to incorporate the Druia monastery into their (Polish - *A.N.*) province, in which they were opposed by Fathers Abrantovich and Tsikota".

Early in June Bishop Sipovich was again called to Rome. On 4 June he met Archbishop Casaroli. Here is his account of the meeting: "His Exc. Casaroli explains: The Holy Father has agreed to reopen the question of a bishopric in Belarus. He left (it to me) to decide on the manner of proceeding in this matter: either to send Bishop Sipovich to the Soviet Union for talks, or to call Father Ul. Charniauski. One cannot trust everything the Soviets say, but one has to do something. I thanked the Holy Father and His Exc. Casaroli. On my part I explained my reasons in favour of my remaining in the shadow, and not to come forward in talks with the Soviets. Here are those reasons:

1. The letter of Father Charniauski, where he writes that if I cannot come, then it is best to invite him.

2. In order not to compromise my work among the (Belarusian) diaspora.

3. One should try to answer the question: why do the Soviet authorities want me to come to the Soviet Union? Obviously in order to try to get from me as much information about the Vatican as possible. About Belarus they know more than I do. My position in the Soviet Union would be very difficult ... and I, without wishing it, could compromise the Apostolic See .... Having listened to all I had to say, Archbishop Casaroli agreed with me".

In spring 1974 Bishop Sipovich was again in Rome. One of the reasons for going there was to take part in the work of the Commission (of which he was a member) for the revision of the Oriental Canon Law. One of the observers present at the sittings of the commission was a representative of Russian Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Herman. The Ukrainian Archbishop Hermaniuk from Canada on 20 March questioned the presence of observers from the churches which had acquiesced in the Communist suppression of the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine. He was supported by the Romanian bishop Cristea, whose church had suffered a similar fate. During the concluding session on 23 March Bishop Cristea read a declaration about the state of the Romanian and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Churches. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "It seemed to me that Father Rezac, a Jesuit who acted as interpreter to Bishop Herman, kept quiet and did not translate the declaration".

Also on 20 March Bishop Sipovich met Mgr Montalvo from the Secretariat of State. The talk turned to the recent meeting of Pope Paul VI and the Soviet Foreign Minister Hramyka. The Bishop wrote in his diary: "The Pope clearly and unequivocally told Hramyka about the criticisms directed at him (the Pope – *A.N.*) on account of his "Ostpolitik", while the Soviet Union does not do anything to satisfy certain basic demands of the Pope... When I remarked that the newspapers write that apparently Hramyka tried to impose certain conditions on the Apostolic See (the Ukrainian church affair must be considered as closed etc.), Mgr Montalvo said that this was not true. In a few days Archbishop Casaroli is going to meet the Soviet representative with concrete proposals in the matter of the appointment of a bishop in

Belarus... Mgr Montalvo said that Archbishop Casaroli was somewhat despondent because of the many criticisms of the Holy Father and of him personally. The cause (of these criticisms – *A.N.*) is the famous cardinals Slipyi and Mindszenty, and not so much the cardinals as politicians who surround them".

The politicians seemed to be not only in the entourage of cardinals Slipyi and Mindszenty. On 27 March in the Secretariat of State Bishop Sipovich met the former Apostolic Delegate to Great Britain, Archbishop Domenico Enrici, who in 1971 had performed the blessing of the Francis Skaryna Library. The Bishop wrote in his diary: "We talk about what has happened in the world and in the Church. When I remarked that one should not ignore some recent events (Ukrainian demands, Cardinal Mindszenty, Solzhenitsyn), he asked me to put it in writing in order to present it to Archbishop Benelli. I promised to do this when I come back to London". In fact Bishop Sipovich made a rough copy of the proposed letter while still in Rome, and showed it to Mgr Montalvo at the Secretariate of State on 30 March. Here is what he wrote about it: "He (Mgr Montalvo – *A.N.*) listened very carefully. Then he asked for a copy for Archbishop Casaroli. During the conversation that followed he discreetly but firmly said the following: if His Holiness the Pope got hold of my notes before Easter, – and there is such a possibility, – he might say in his Easter message things which would cause much embarrassment, especially if they were not accompanied by proper comments. In the papal curia there are also opponents of Archbishop Casaroli's "Ostpolitik", and some of my remarks could be used as arguments in their favour... We discussed all this in greater detail, and I began to feel sadness and heaviness in my heart: when all is said, politics remains politics. And it seemed to me that it (i.e. politics – *A.N.*) tried to hide Christ himself. In my notes I wanted to draw attention to some things which diminish the authority of the Apostolic See and the person of Paul VI, especially now, when there have appeared such personalities as Slipyi, Mindszenty, Solzhenitsyn. The latter told the truth (In December 1973 there appeared in Paris Solshzenitsyn's famous *Gulag Artchipelago*, in which the author described the horrors of Soviet prison camps – *A. N.*) which should have been first said by the Holy Father himself. And here they are even afraid to show him certain facts. After this conversation I promised to revise my notes once again and post them later from London. I am accustomed to obey my superiors. In this matter I am completely free, but in my soul a confusion reigns: what have I got myself into? And is all this which I have written necessary? But I, the last and least of the apostles, wanted only to help the good Paul VI who is carrying such a heavy burden. Holy Spirit, enlighten my reason!"

It is not known whether Bishop Sipovich actually did send his letter from London. Most probably he had second thoughts, because there is no record of it among his papers.

If Bishop Sipovich was disturbed by what he had learned, he did not show it. In September 1975 he was invited to preach a retreat for the priests of the Ruthenian diocese of Passaic in the United States. On 16 September there was a general discussion. Bishop Sipovich made the following entry in his diary: "At 10 a.m., after breakfast, there was a dialogue-discussion. The following subjects were raised: the Jews...; the attitude of the Vatican towards Eastern Catholics: why are there no Orientals in the Oriental Congregation? The Vatican's 'Ostpolitik' and its (diplomatic) game with Moscow. A priest asked me a question: 'In 1968 Your Excellency, while in New Zealand, declared that there was not even one bishop in Belarus. What did the Vatican do in this matter?' I was surprised not at the question, but because there was a priest who was closely following our church affairs. All my

answers were in the spirit of ‘sentire cum Ecclesia (to be at one with the Church)’. One of the priests called me an incorrigible optimist".

On 21 July 1974 Auberon Herbert, one of the founders of the Anglo-Belarusian Society and its chairman for many years, died suddenly. A descendant of an old Anglo-Welsh noble family and a Catholic, during last years of his life he considered himself to be a parishioner of SS Peter and Paul Belarusian church in London. The boys from St Cyril’s House had their summer camps on his estate at Dulverton in Somerset. It was his wish to be buried by Bishop, Sipovich. The funeral took place on 23 July.

On 17 August 1974 in Germany Father Uladizmier Salaviej at the age of 56 died as the result of a road accident. He had acted as Bishop Sipovich’s secretary in 1960 during the Eucharistic Congress in Munich, and later during the Vatican II Ecumenical Council. He was a man of great goodness and generosity, liked by everyone who knew him. His love of liturgical prayer was well known, and people were always impressed by his piety and the beautiful manner in which he celebrated the Liturgy. At his funeral on 22 August in Munich the Liturgy was celebrated by two bishops, Ceslaus Sipovich and the Exarch of the Ukrainian Catholics in Germany Platon Kornylak, together with several priests. Also present were the Ukrainian Orthodox bishop Orestes and many people of different nationalities, Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant.

A month later, on 19 September 1974 the Ukrainian Archbishop Ivan Buchko died in Rome. He had been the chief consecrator of Bishop Sipovich in 1960. Bishop Sipovich had a great respect for him and valued his advice. He always paid him a visit when he was in Rome. They met for the last time in March 1974.

Bishop Sipovich also suffered a personal loss at this time. On 26 October 1974 his mother Jadviha died at the age of 84 in the village of Dziedzina in Belarus. Bishop Sipovich had not seen her since 1938 when he was expelled from Druia and left for Rome. He often used to say that he owed his faith and his consciousness of Belarusian national identity to his mother. His father died in 1957.

The year 1974 was a difficult one for Bishop Sipovich in many respects. There were also difficult decisions to be made. Thanks to Father Leo Haroshka the Belarusian broadcasts on the Vatican Radio had markedly improved. This did not go unnoticed by those in charge of the Radio, and there was talk of expanding the work of the Belarusian section by allotting it more time. At the same time the Communist authorities in Soviet Belarus launched a bitter press attack against the Vatican Radio and Father Haroshka personally. This was a sure sign that people in Belarus were listening to the Belarusian broadcasts. However Father Haroshka who had turned 63 in 1974 found it difficult to cope alone with the increased workload, and needed an assistant. It was therefore decided to send Father Robert Tamushanski to Rome In summer 1974 he had obtained the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the London University. In October he left London, leaving behind only one priest under 60. For this reason, and also because of the deteriorating economic situation, it was regretfully decided to phase out the St Cyril’s House boarding house, while giving of course the remaining boys the opportunity to finish their studies. Father Nadson continued to be in charge of them, combining these duties with those of acting rector of the Belarusian Mission and librarian of the Francis Skaryna Library.

In 1973 Cardinal Paul Philippe, a French Dominican, became the new prefect of the Oriental Congregation. He and Bishop Sipovich had known each other for many years, and his appointment did not bring about any changes as far as Belarusians were concerned. On the other hand, in June 1974 Mgr Gabriel Montalvo

who for almost ten years had been in charge of Belarusian affairs, and in particular of the Charniauski case, in the Secretariat of State became an archbishop and was appointed Nuncio to Honduras and Nicaragua. His place was taken by Mgr Ivan Dias. Bishop Sipovich met him for the first time one year later, on 21 June 1975. Here are his impressions: "Meeting in the Secretariat of State with Mgr Ivan Dias who replaced Mgr Montalvo. An Indian. Draws attention to prayer. Often repeats: Fatima, Madonna ha detto... (Fatima, Our Lady has said...). Is in charge of Slavonic and Chinese affairs. Says that lately 'Mosca é irrigidita (Moscow became more rigid)'". The second meeting was on 2 July: "Before lunch I go to the Secretariat of State and talk with Mgr Ivan Dias. This mystic talks about Fatima, about prayer. One can feel bitterness against Cardinal Mindszenty, against all national groups in the Free World".

On 2 October 1975 another Belarusian priest, Father Thomas Padziava died in London at the age of 69. He had been sent to study in Rome at the Russicum in 1929. In 1935, after having obtained ae doctor's degree in Philosophy and licenciate in Theology, and being ordained priest, he was sent to Harbin, where he spent 14 years working among Russians. Arrested by the Communists at Christmas 1948 he was sentenced to 25 years hard labour in Soviet prison camps in Siberia, but was released in 1955 after the death of Stalin and deported to Poland. In 1969 he managed to get to Rome where he declared that he wanted to work for the rest of his life among his own people. Unable to return to Belarus he settled in London at Marian House. His health did not allow him to lead an active life, but he wrote a great deal. Some of his works appeared in *Bozhym shliakham* and *Znic*, but most of them still remain in manuscript form. He had an astonishing memory, a wide knowledge coupled with a lively intellect and the ability to explain the most complicated matters clearly. In different circumstances Father Padziava might have become an outstanding philosopher and spiritual writer, of whom Belarusians could be justly proud. As it is we are left only with a glimpse of what might have been and a memory of an exemplary and saintly man and priest. Bishop Sipovich was in the United States when Father Padziava died, and the funeral was conducted by Father Nadson.

The 41st International Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia on 1-8 August 1976 was the last big international event in which Bishop Sipovich took part. The motto of the Congress was "Christ, the Bread of Life" as an answer to the "Hungers of the Human Family". There was a large and well organised Belarusian group at the Congress, mainly thanks to the efforts and organisational talents of Father Uladzimir Tarasevitch, pastor of Christ the Redeemer Church in Chicago. Apart from taking part in the general events, Belarusians had a special church assigned to them for their own functions. It was there, during the special Liturgy on 7 August that Bishop Sipovich gave a homily in English and Belarusian, in which among other things he said: "The Liturgy – it is true – demands of us faith, but at the same time it is a powerful means of sustaining that same faith. Such truths as the Incarnation of Christ, His salvific action as Redeemer, the mystery of the Holy Trinity, the Divine Motherhood of Our Lady, the mystical life of Jesus in the Eucharist – in no other prayer or public ceremony are they so intensely made manifest as in our Liturgy. But to recognise all of these truths and to live them, requires a strong faith... This is one reason why our Liturgy always demands the reading or singing of the Nicean Creed: I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and of all things both visible and invisible... So it is that throughout our ancient Liturgy earthly and heavenly things are visibly intermingled, and everyday acts are wonderfully sanctified by

liturgical prayers and hymns. Let us then draw inspiration from our Liturgy and enrich our everyday life".

On 28 July 1977 Father Leo Haroshka died in a hospital in Paris, following an unsuccessful operation. He was 66 years old. His death was deeply felt not only by Belarusian Catholics, but by the whole Belarusian community. All those who met Father Haroshka had a strong awareness of being in the presence of a man who lived the truth of his religion. His sermons and articles on religious subjects only strengthened this impression. As a scholar he did much to show the Belarusians the Christian roots of their culture, whether he was writing about the 12th century Saint Euphrosinia of Polatsak, Belarusian church architecture, devotion to the Mother of God in Belarus, or religious elements in Belarusian folk culture. He constantly defended the right of Belarusians to be what they were and develop freely their God-given talents. He was particularly indignant with those who used religion for their political ends. His work "Under the sign of the Russian and Polish Faith"[46], published in *Bozhym shliakham* , was a study, the first of its kind, of the "Kulturkampf", under the guise of religion, of the neighbours of Belarus from the East and West against everything Belarusian. His dream was the restoration of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church. He respected all rites in the Church, but had never been tempted to become "biritualist", i.e. to be allowed to celebrate in both the Roman and Byzantine rites, according to need (or convenience). He believed in the equality of all rites in the Catholic Church, and felt that by becoming a biritualist he would diminish the value of his own Byzantine rite. His death had a very wide echo among the Belarusian community throughout the world. Numerous messages of sympathy were received, among them from Pope Paul VI and the head of the Belarusian Autocephalous Orthodox Church Metropolitan Andrew Kryt. The funeral took place on 8 August in London, where his body was brought from Paris by Father Nadson.

The death of Father Haroshka created new problems for the rapidly diminishing community of Belarusian priests. This was discussed at their reunion in Rome on 14-21 October 1977. The main problem was how to continue to do all the work with an ever decreasing number of priests. Father Tamushanski became the head of the Belarusian programmes on Vatican Radio, while Father Nadson, in addition to his duties in England, was appointed chaplain to the Belarusians in France, and from then on he had to shuttle between London and Paris. Because of the Synod of Bishops which was taking place at that time in Rome, the petition to the Pope requesting the appointment of a Belarusian bishop in Belarus was handed to the Secretary of State, Cardinal Jean Villiot. A visit to Monsignor Tatarynovich, now in a nursing home for old priests, was a poignant reminder that their number would soon be still smaller.

The year 1978 saw many changes in the Catholic Church. On 6 August Pope Paul VI died. He had reigned in the very difficult post-conciliar period. A man of peace, it was he who made the first step towards healing the nearly thousand-year old rift between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. On the other hand his attempts to bring relief to the Catholics in the Soviet Union and other Communist-dominated countries by open means were viewed by many with mixed feelings and even brought accusations of cooperation with the Communists. In a conversation with Mgr

[46] Haroshka L., "Pad znakam ruskaie i polskaie viery", *Bozhym shliakham*, No.60, 1954, pp.12-24; No.61, 1954, pp.6-10; No.62, 1954, pp.5-11; No.63, 1954, pp.8-12; No.64-65, 1955, pp.4-14

Monatlvo on 20 March 1974 Bishop Sipovich mentioned the rumours in the newspapers, alleging that the Soviet Foreign minister Hramyka had spelled out to the Pope the conditions for further talks with the Holy See, one of them being that the question of the Greek Catholic Church in the Ukraine, which had been destroyed by the Communists in 1946, must be considered a "closed" issue. Monsignor Montalvo denied this. As far as Belarusians were concerned, the Vatican's attempts to obtain the consent of the Soviet authorities for the appointment of a bishop in Belarus could hardly be called a success. After the death of Paul VI and the brief pontificate of John Paul I, on 16 October 1978 Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Cracow, was elected the new successor of Saint Peter. The First non-Italian Pope for nearly 400 years, and the first Head of the Catholic Church from a Communist-dominated country. (Later, on 19 January 1979 he would say to Bishop Sipovich that while he was well familiar with Communist politics, Vatican politics remained still a mystery for him...). Belarusians were somewhat apprehensive, not knowing what to expect from the Polish Pope. What gave them reason to hope was that Belarusian was among the 48 languages, in which Pope John Paul II greeted the world on the first Christmas of his pontificate.

This was also a year in which Belarusians suffered new lossess. Although not unexpected, they were nevertheless painful. On 11 June Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch OSB, the founder of the Belarusian parish of Christ the Redeemer in Chicago, died at the age of 86. Just under three months later, on 3 September, came the death at the age of 82 of Monsignor Peter Tatarynovich who for thirty years had been a one-man Belarusian institution in the Eternal City. Finally on 26 December Father Joseph Hermanovich died in London in the 89th year of his life and 66th of priesthood. A priest, poet and teacher, he was one of the best-known and best-loved people among the Belarusian community throughout the world. Because of the Christmas holidays the funeral did not take place till 8 January. A huge congregation of people of many nationalities and religions attended. The funeral Liturgy was celebrated by Bishop Ceslaus Sipovich in concelebration with Father Nadson. Those present included the Superior General of Marian Fathers Joseph Sielski who preached a short sermon which Bishop Sipovich characterised in his diary as "pleasant, 'sweet' and 'tactful'". In his own eulogy Bishop Sipovich stressed the fact that "without Father Joseph and his educational work in Druia there would be no Belarusian bishop, just as without Polish Cardinal Wyszynski there would be no Polish Pope".

The Belarusian priests who gathered in Rome on 14 January 1979 were in a subdued mood. Apart from Bishop Sipovich there were only four other priests present, namely Fathers Uladzimir Tarasevitch from Chicago, Alexander Nadson from London, Robert Tamushanski and Constantine Maskalik from Rome. The problems of pastoral work with an ever decreasing number of priests were discussed, including the possiblility of ordaining married men and the need of religious literature and liturgical texts in Belarusian. But the main item the petition to the Pope to renew the efforts of his predecessor to appoint a Belarusian bishop there. On 19 January they had private audience with the Pope. The Holy Father first received Bishop Sipovich alone. Afterwards the Bishop wrote in his diary: "I said that the Holy Father knew why we were coming, namely to ask him to appoint a bishop for Belarus in the person of Father Charniauski, because there is periculum in mora (it is dangerous to wait – *A.N.*) and the Catholic Church may disappear. The Holy Father agreed that the Church in Belarus is danger of extinction... He asks: 'When you talk about Belarus, what do you understand by it?' I say: 'The BSSR (i.e. the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic – *A.N.*) in its post-war form, consisting of the (former – *A. N.*) BSSR and

Western Belarus which had been under the Polish rule'... The Pope said: 'Polish bishops and Cardinal Wyszynski watch the situation in Belarus and from time to time send their priests there, thinking in this way to save the situation; but I think that a bishop is needed there'... Then the Pope delicately remarked that in Belarus they pray in Polish and the Soviet authorities consider Catholics as a foreign element... Here I tried to explain that young people in Belarus don't know the Polish language, and that not all educated Belarusians are atheists or hostile to religion. We must help them. The Pope asks about Father Charniauski; he says: 'This name is familiar to me. Who is he, a Marian?' I say: 'Yes!'. 'Well, perhaps something may be done!'... Then our priests began coming in... I briefly present each one, giving his name and position... Then he invited us to the middle of the room, and when everyone stood alongside the Pope, I read the greetings and explained in a few words the purpose of the present reunion and this audience... Then we went back to the Belarusian (Service of the Vatican) Radio, and there I informed the Fathers about my conversation with the Pope. Father Nadson remarked: 'I am sure the Polish bishops will try to impose on the Pope their own solution of the problem of Belarus and a Belarusian bishop'. I had no doubts about it even before the audience".

From the above account of the audience it appears that the new Pope was not very well informed about the religious situation in Belarus. This was not surprising; until his election less than three months earlier he had been Bishop of Cracow and not directly involved in Belarusian affairs. Most probably his main informants were Cardinal Wyszynski and the Polish bishops from Bialystok and Drohiczyn, whose dioceses bordered on Belarus. In the Polish emigré press articles about the religious situation in Belarus appeared from time to time, most of them hostile to the use of Belarusian in the Catholic churches and attacking Father Charniauski as a "Belarusian nationalist". Thus a certain J. Mirski (most probably a pseudonym of a Polish priest) who visited Soviet Union in 1970-73, responding to the Belarusian author, W. Bryleuski, wrote in the Polish influential monthly *Kultura* in 1976: "In fact I don't like the activity of Father Charniauski insofar as he attempts to impose on the people his personal Belarusian ideas, thus harming their faith, if he does it against their will. Moreover, speaking objectively, he serves not so much Belarus as the Soviet Union, because from the Belarusian language in the church it is nearer to Russian, to the Orthodox faith and Russification, than from Polish and Latin"[47]. Further on he asserts: "Now the pressure of Russification has been intensified. Does Mr Bryleuski realise what their (i.e. the local Catholic population – *A.N.*) reaction would be if the priests began using Belarusian consistently? It would be considered as a shameful betrayal both of the Church and of themselves, abandoning them as booty to the Soviet Leviathan who in any case is swallowing them"[48]. If one overlooks the emotional language, what the author was trying to say was that the Catholic Church in Belarus could survive only in the Polish form and with the Polish language. There was nothing new in this argument: it was used by the Poles in the 19th and early 20th centuries. It was wrong then, but after the Vatican II Council, which proclaimed the equality of all languages in the Catholic Church, it sounded preposterous and positively antedeluvian. But of course it was not concern for the Church that prompted Mirski to use this argument. In this earlier article in the same journal he wrote: "The only mainstay of the Polish spirit and Catholicism in Belarus are the few

[47] Mirski J., "Jeszcze o Bialorusi", *Kultura*, No.9, Paris 1976, p.105
[48] *Ibid*., p.106

remaining Polish churches"[49]. Another author, P. Lida, writing in 1980, spelled it out even more clearly: "Liquidation of the Church would mean liquidation of the last bastion of the Polish presence, which for over six centuries has exercised its influence in the formation of the spirit and culture of these lands"[50].

It is hard to say whether the Pope was familiar with these and similar publications. It seems, however, that he was much better informed about Belarus, when he and Bishop Sipovich met again in March 1980.

Bishop Sipovich had left London for Rome on 13 March. At Rome airport he met Fiorenzo Tagliabue, editor of the weekly *Il Sabato*, who offered him and a Polish priest from Cracow, Father Styczen, a lift in his car. During the drive the conversation turned to the situation in Belarus. Bishop Sipovich wrote: "Father Styczen said that Father Dzwonkowski, who writes for the Paris *Kultura*, visits Belarus every year. I say: ‘Is his pseudonym Mirski?’ He answered it was very likely, although his memory was not certain. When I began to criticise strongly Mirski’s article, in which he wrote that the Polish spirit in Belarus was maintained by the priests alone, Father Styczen was sorry that he had ever mentioned the name of Dzwonkowski. The conversation was interesting, but the Polish idea of the apostolate in Belarus proved to be not much different form that in the pre-war Poland, so well known to me".

On the next day Bishop Sipovich went to the Vatican to try to arrange an audience with the Holy Father. He wrote in his diary: "Soon after the liturgy, which I offered for Belarus, for Father Charniauski and for successful outcome of my affairs in Rome, I went to St Peter’s Basilica to pay a visit to the First Pope (i.e. Saint Peter – *A.N.*)... I made my confession and prayed at the tomb of St Peter and near the relics of St Josaphat, Archbishop of Polatsak... From the Basilica – and it was raining, – I went to the Papal Prefecture to arrange an audience with Pope John Paul II. Bishop J. Martin (prefect of the Papal household – *A.N.*) received me kindly... Bishop Martin asks me when I arrivd, how long I intend to remain. He hints that the Pope is overloaded with audiences, but because of my insistence to obtain a private audience, asks me to write a short application. He leaves me again alone... I wrote a short letter-request in Italian and gave it to Bishop Martin. He read it and said: ‘Good!" I asked him to make a photocopy of my letter, and he kindly did so, then said: ‘Wait here, I shall go and ask my ‘superiors’ about your audience’. He returned quickly and said: ‘Fifty-fifty’. I don’t know who this ‘superior’ of Bishop Martin is. Before, a year ago everything depended on him. Now everything has changed. Some people say that everything depends now on the Cracow priest Dziwosz who is the Pope’s private secretary. Be it as it may, I have decided to follow the direct route, not to sneak round the corner and engage in behind-the-scenes diplomacy. In any case, I have commended my case to Saint Peter and have full confidence in him. There has never been a case in my life when he disappointed me".

From the Papal prefecture Bishop Sipovich went to the Oriental Congregation. There, as he wrote in his diary "someone said that the successor of Cardinal Philippe (he will be 75 in April) is going be Cardinal Rubin. I remarked that the Ukrainians and Belarusians will not be pleased". Cardinal Wladyslaw Rubin was a Pole.

Bishop’s diary: "Saturday 15 III.1980. I stay at home (via Corsica 1). Make photocopies of articles from *Kultura*, especially one interesting article by a P. Lida (Father Dzwonkowski?) who writes against the use of the Belarusian language by Father Ul. Charniauski, and against his behaviour. He defends the old tradition which

---

[49] Mirski J., "WraΔenia z ZSSR 1970-1973", *Kultura*, No.9, Paris 1973, p.63

[50] Lida P. "Polacy, Litwini, Bialorusini" *Kultura,* No.1-2, Paris 1980, p.61

was forced on us by the Poles and Russians: Pole means Catholic, Russian – Orthodox. For the Belarusian there is no place in heaven or on earth!...

Wednesday 19 III.80. I cannot sleep at night. Various thoughts keep me awake, especially what to say to the Pope and what to ask him, when I succeed in getting an audience. What pains me most is that none of the Poles has showed any deeper interest in Belarus, her culture, her people. For them Belarus is just (part of) Russia, where the homegrown apostles make their missionary experiments. I want to tell this to Pope John Paul II. But how? And when?".

The audience took place on Friday 22 March. Here is how Bishop Sipovich described it: "... I see Bishop Martin. We greet each other. He conducts me to the room, where together with a bishop from Africa I wait for my turn. Then I talk to Mgr Pec, a Pole from the Poznan region, who is in charge of the order of audiences. 12.15 p.m. I hear the bell at Mgr Pec's table, and he goes first to see the Pope who gives the sign for me to enter. I say 'Praised be Jesus Christ'. Simultaneously the Pope says in Polish 'Praised be Jesus Christ'. He asks me to sit down. The Pope himself sits by the table. Before him there is an open atlas. I see in it the map of Belarus. The Pope says: 'I have prayed several times for Belarus. Now I have her before my eyes'. He shows the map. 'Il paese chiuso... (closed country...)', he repeats literally... I say: 'This is our request: give us a bishop in the person of Father Charniauski'. .... The Pope says: 'The Bishop of Drohiczyn came to see me. He spoke much about Belarus'. Then he repeated: 'Il mondo chiuso... (closed world)'. I want to draw the Pope's attention to the attitude of the Poles towards Belarus and Belarusians. I quote part of my memorandum in Latin, where I say that the Poles, no one knows why, call Belarus Russia, and describe Belarus as poor and miserable; but if you ask them about Belarus, they know nothing: neither language, nor history or culture. I say: 'Belarus today has many things that are beautiful in many respects'. The Pope listens carefuly, follows with his eyes the text which I read. I felt at that moment some uneasiness, because the Pope was prepared to hear about 'poor and miserable Belarus'; instead, he heard something different... I say once again: 'If you can, please appoint a bishop in Belarus'. He says: 'I have heard about Father Charniauski. There are some objections against him'. I say: 'At this moment we have no one better than him. If for some reason you reject him, we shall try to find someone else...' My audience lasted about 30 minutes. I thank God, His Mother and Saint Peter for everything".

From this account it is evident that this time the Holy Father was well prepared for the audience. In particular he knew about Father Charniauski and the objections against him. It may be a coincidence, but the expression "closed world" had been used by J. Mirski in his 1976 article: "My intention was to give some facts and observations which could shed a ray of light on this closed and little known world"[51].

It was a momentous audience: For the first time a Belarusian bishop had told a Polish Pope the truth about the attitude of the Poles towards his nation. He did it with dignity and charity, but nonetheless firmly and without hiding anything, however painful. Perhaps Bishop Sipovich had a feeling that this might be his last meeting here on earth with the Vicar of Christ, and he owed it to his people to tell him what weighed heavily in his heart.

---

51 Mirski J., "Jeszcze...", p.106

## 20. Friends old and new

Bishop Sipovich came back to London in 1969 with health problems which became more serious as time went on. This did not make him stop or even slow down his activities. One person who knew Bishop Sipovich well said, after his death that he had loved life very much. Indeed he showed a tremendous "joie de vivre", considered life the most wonderful gift of God, too good to be wasted. That was the secret of his energy which was an object of wonder to many people who met him. Only those near him knew that not everything was well. He always carried with him medicine for his heart condition. His frequent air trips did not help. Sometimes he made a note of it in his diary, as for example on 11 September 1975 en route to New York: "After the meal my heart began to beat violently, I had to take a tablet, and even then could not calm down for a long time". Incidentally while in the United States the Bishop consulted a Belarusian doctor about his health. This was Dr Vitaut Tumash (1910 – 1998), one of the most remarkable men in the Belarusian diaspora. Soon after his arrival to the United States he began to work in a hospital in one of the most deprived districts of New York, the Bronx, and remained there until he retired. All his free time he dedicated to research on the life and work of his illustrious predecessor, the first Belarusian printer and editor of the Biblical texts,who was also a doctor of medicine, Francis Skaryna (c.1485-1550). It may be said without exaggeration that Dr Tumash was one of the greatest authorities on the subject, and his numerous publications constitute a valuable contribution to the study of the Belarusian Renaissance. For many years he held the post of the President of the Belarusian Institute of Arts and Sciences, of which he was one of the founders. In his professional capacity he liked to help people without advertising the fact. Bishop Sipovich had great respect for Dr Tumash both as a man and as a doctor. In his diary on 18 June 1975: there is a note: "On our way we stopped at Zaprudniks' place to collect medicine which was sent to me by Dr Tumash". Again, before leaving for the United States in 1976 for the Eucharistic Congress, among "the things to do" there is also "to consult Dr Tumash about the state of my health".

Bishop Sipovich valued human friendship, and if he became friends with someone, it meant they were friends for life. Many such friends were in the United States. Among them were Francis and Vera Bartul, a couple of exceptional goodness, whose house in New York became open house for all Belarusian visitors. The Bartuls had been Father Sipovich's parishioners in London until 1957, when they emigrated to the United States. On every visit to the American continent Bishop Sipovich made sure not to miss their house. On 19 June 1975, before leaving New York, the Bishop made the following entry in his diary: "In all my travels and work the Bartuls helped me selflessly and with love. May the good Lord recompense them for everything". At the end of his second visit on 12 October in the same year he wrote: "Francis B(artul) takes me to Kennedy Airport... We are all moved more than usual. Tears in our eyes. Ultimum vale est acerbum (the last goodbye is harsh)". As it happened this was not their last meeting: they met again in 1976 during the Eucharistic Congress, and in 1978.

Dr Vincent Zhuk-Hryshkievich, the founder of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain, had emigrated to Canada in 1949. After the death of Nicholas Abramtchyk in 1970 he became President of the Council of the Belarusian National Republic (BNR) in Exile. He and his wife Raisa lived in Barrie. They were the only Belarusian couple there, the nearest larger Belarusian community being in Toronto some 100 miles away. The bonds of friendship which developed between the then Father Sipovich and Dr Zhuk-Hryshkievich during their work in common among

Belarusian emigrés first in Italy and then in England, remained firm for the rest of their lives. During his American trips Bishop Sipovich always included Barrie in his itinerary. The Hryshkievichs visited London twice, in 1972 and 1979 (Dr Raisa Zhuk-Hryshkievich was also present at the opening of the Library in 1971), and both times they were guests of Bishop Sipovich.

The Belarusian community in New York in 1960s and 70s was one of the largest and arguably the best organised. It played an important role in the political and cultural life of the Belarusian emigration. There was a number of religious, cultural and political organisations and institutions which represented the particular interests of their members, while the Belarusian-American Association, which had its headquarters in New York, served as an "umbrella" organisation for all Belarusians in the United States. It was customary for the Association to extend a welcome to distinguished Belarusian visitors from abroad. But not always and not to all visitors. In 1957 Father Sipovich went to the United States for the first time . Here is what he wrote in his diary on the day of his arrival in New York, 16 September 1957: "Having completed all formalities, I went to the exit and with pleasure recognised two compatriots, Mr Adamovich and Mr Shukeloyts, waiting for me... On the way in the taxi Mr Shukeloyts related to me many things about the local Belarusians. Among other things he told me about an incident at a Committee meeting of the Belarusian-American Association. When the question of a reception in my honour came under discussion and Mr Shukeloyts expressed himself in favour of it, P(eter). Dvaretski asked him: ‘And you, Mr Shukeloyts, what is your religion?’. This made Shukeloyts and others indignant".

Since then Bishop Sipovich had made several visits to New York, attended many public events, some of them arranged in his honour by organisations such as the Institute of Arts and Sciences or the Belarusian Catholic University Union. But he had to wait eighteen years for a tribute from the Belarusian-American Association. This took the form of a reception on 14 June 1975 in a New York restaurant. Francis Bartul was in the chair. The first to greet the Bishop was Mr Anthony Shukeloyts, Chairman of the Association. He was followed by Dr Stanislau Stankievich, editor of the Belarusian paper *Belarus* and a well known literary critic, who two years previously had visited London and was a guest of the Francis Skaryna Library. Doctor Vitaut Tumash compared the work done by Bishop Sipovich to that of Father Adam Stankievich before the war in Vilna. Mrs Zinaida Stankievich, on behalf of Belarusian women, talked about personal traits of Bishop Sipovich’s character, namely his readiness to come to the assistance of anyone in need. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary: "This was the first official reception in my honour by the New York Belarusian-American Association".

During his second visit in Chicago in 1961 (the first was in 1957), Bishop Sipovich found the Belarusian Greek Catholic parish of Christ the Redeemer "under new management". The occasion was the consecration of the new parish church at 3107 W. Fullerton Avenue, which took place on 2 July. The new pastor was Father Uladzimir Tarasevitch (1921-86), the nephew of Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch. He came to the United States from Belarus in 1938. There he followed in the footsteps of his uncle and joined St Procopius Benedictine monastery at Lisle, where he was groomed from the beginning for the "Russian apostolate". He was ordained priest in 1949 and, after theological studies at the Catholic University of America in Washington, went in 1951 to Rome to continue his studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute. He stayed there till 1958. During that period he travelled much in Europe, met Fathers Tatarynovich, Haroshka and Sipovich, attended the study weeks of the

Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run’" etc. This made him conscious of the needs of his own people. On his return to Chicago Father Uladzimir’s first concern was to set up proper pastoral care for the Belarusian community. He proved a very good organiser, and did much for the local Belarusian Greek Catholic community in Chicago. However, with time he became more involved with English-speaking visitors who began to attend Christ the Redeemer Church regularily. To make the celebration more meaningful to them it was eventually decided to introduce the Liturgy in English. From mid-1961 on Sundays and feast days two liturgies were celebrated, one for the Belarusians and one for the English speakers. In practice this meant that there were two communities which met from time to time on special occasions, such as a bishop’s visit or an anniversary, but otherwise living each their own life. The English-speaking community at Christ the Redeemer Church were all American Roman Catholics who found the Byzantine rite attractive, especially since there was no need to learn a "foreign" language (it all began before the Vatican II Council, when the language of worship in the Roman rite was still Latin). They were all good people, but with hardly any interest in Belarus. The amount of energy and time given to them was perhaps the main reason why Christ the Redeemer Church had never fulfilled its initial promise of becominge a major Belarusian religious and cultural centre on the American continent.

In fairness it must be said that Father Uladzimir Tarasevitch was one of the first to introduce Belarusian in place of Church Slavonic in the Liturgy for Belarusians. The replacement was only partial, probably because of the lack of adequate Belarusian translations, but still it was a step in the right direction. Not everyone was pleased with this innovation. Thus, as Bishop Sipovich noted in his diary on 5 June 1975, Father John Chrysostom Tarasevitch, after they had celebrated the Liturgy together, told him that "one must not replace Church Slavonic by Belarusian, so as not to harm the work of reunion". Bishop Sipovich was then in Chicago to confer the title of Archimandrite on Father Uladzimir Tarasevitch.

Bishop Sipovich visited Chicago for the last time in May 1978. On Whitsunday, 14 May, he celebrated the Divine liturgy at Christ the Redeemer church. The concelebrants were Archimandrite Uladzimir Tarasevitch and Father John Chrysostom Tarasevitch. The parish madea special celebration in honour of Father Chrysostom, who was in his 86th year of his life and 55th of priesthood. He was already very weak. Four weeks later, on Sunday 11 June, he died.

The Belarusian Greek Catholic parish of Christ the Redeemer in Chicago owed its existence to the initiative and insistence of a number of Belarusian emigré families, some Orthodox but mostly Catholic. Deeply concerned with the religious divisions among Belarusians, they became convinced that the way to the unity was through the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church, which was suppressed by Russians in 1839. It is to the credit of Fathers Chrysostom, and in particular Uladzimir Tarasevitch who recognised the need and opportunity for real pastoral work and gave themselves to it wholeheartedly. Strong bonds of friendship, mutual respect and undertanding existed between Father Uladzimir and Bishop Sipovich, resulting in fruitful cooperation during the period of several years.

A characteristic feature of Christ the Redeemer church was the existence among its members of groups of families, one is tempted to call them "clans" in the nicest sense of the word, which contributed in particular ways to the parish life. One such group consisted of the Bielenis and Panutsevich families. They lived in a big beautiful house within walking distance of the church, each family occupying one floor. As has been mentioned before, the wives of Anthony Bielenis and Vatslau Panutsevich were sisters, daughters of Edward Budzka who died in 1958. He was

survived by his widow Valeria who lived in the same house, as did her unmarried son, Cheslau, a man with an astonishing knowledge of facts (and some strange theories) from the history of Belarus, of which he could talk for hours. Belarusian visitor could be always sure of a warm welcome in that house. Bishop Sipovich became friendly with all members of this "Budzka clan", especially with Anthony Bielenis who helped him much during his subsequent visits. Cheslau Budzka presented his rich collection of Belarusian books, personal notes and files to the Francis Skaryna Library.

John Charnetski was another old Catholic who, like Edward Budzka, had been involved in the Belarusian national movement since almost the beginning of the 20th century. His daughter Irene married Doctor Peter Gajdziel, Bishop Sipovich's school friend from Druia, whom he met again after 20 years in 1957. Irena's sister, Vanda Machnach, a person of extreme goodness, was always ready to help anyone who asked her.

The Zhyznieuski family likewise played a prominent role in the life of the parish. Before moving to Chicago, they had lived at Peoria where their daughter Vera attended the university. She later married Doctor Vitaut Ramuk, a former student of the Catholic University of Louvain and active member of the Belarusian Catholic University Union "Run'". Her brother, Nicodemus Zhyznieuski, conducted Belarusian programmes on the local radio. He was also invaluable when anything needed to be done in the church. The Zhyznieuski family were Greek Catholic. Stephen Zhyznieuski died in 1962. His widow, Eudocia, was one of the most loyal members of Christ the Redeemer parish until her death in early 1990s. Anthony Bielenis, Vanda Machnach and Vera Romuk were members of the Belarusian Charitable Fund, whose purpose was to give financial support for various projects of Bishop Sipovich.

There were several other equally dedicated families and individuals who contributed much to the life of the community. Some Orthodox Belarusians also joined the parish, among them the well known composer Mikola Kulikovich (1896-1969) who conducted the church choir.

One of the traits of Bishop Sipovich's character was that he was genuinely interested in people. He always paid full attention to whoever he talked with, taking care not to make him feel insignificant or ridiculous, even when sometimes it was difficult to keep the straight face, as in the case of one Belarusian who was going to send his Alsatian dog to... a school at 60 dollars per week!

Bishop Sipovich always tried to see the good side in everyone. Thus in Cleveland, after meeting Eugene Kakhanouski and his wife for the first time, he made the following note in his diary on 4 October 1975: "About Kakhanouskis I cannot say anything bad, on the contrary they both were polite, helpful; their intelligent conversation on the things which concern us (i.e. Belarusians – *A.N.*) convinced me that among our people there are many persons, with whom it is worthwhile to maintain a closer contact".

It was this positive attitude and friendliness that attracted other people to Bishop Sipovich and made them come to him with their problems. And they were not necessarily Belarusians. In London one of his friends was the rabbi of the local synagogue. They were both keen chess players and spent much time at the chess board. Here is how Bishop Sipovich described one such encounter on 18 February 1979: "In the evening rabbi Baum came to the library. He was on his way from a barmizvah and brought me a piece of very sweet honey cake. We played two games of chess. In both cases I lost, although in the second game I was in a stronger position

but underestimated my opponent. A very interesting man is this rabbi Baum. He is polite, patient, and maintains that I am a better player, because he knows only how to defend himself! If someone defends himself and wins, and the one, who attacks, loses, then who is the better player of the two?"

First and foremost among Bishop's Belarusian friends in London were Jan Michaluk and his wife Helen. They were both Orthodox. Helen Michaluk was for many years the matron of St Cyril's House, where three of their sons were educated. Jan Michaluk for over a quarter of a century was chairman of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain. They were the couple of exceptional integrity, innate dignity, and profound understanding of Belarusian national problems. Bishop Sipovich had a great respect for their judgment and consulted them on matters of importance. When in 1979 the Francis Skaryna Library became a charitable trust, John Michaluk was among its trustees.

The tendency to see good in others made Bishop Sipovich make certain mistakes. This was made especially evident in the last years of his life when the future of the Marian community in Marian House became doubtful. Bishop Sipovich was ready to believe in the sincerity of anyone who declared his attachment to the Marian Fathers and expressed a wish to join them. Such was a young German who after failing in a number of German seminaries, was accepted by Bishop Sipovich and stayed in Marian House for 3 years (1975-78). There were others who stayed for shorter periods, among them a very pleasant and well spoken young Australian, whose understanding of the religious life did not include the effort of getting up in the morning for the Liturgy or taking part in the work of the community.

Bishop Sipovich bore with equanimity these disappointments.

Bishop Sipovich's hospitality was well known, as many visitors from all over the world could testify. Initially these were mainly Belarusians or people interested in the Eastern Christianity and Christian unity. The Francis Skaryna Library, after its establishment in 1971, began to attract visitors of another type. These were scholars in the Slavic and East European fields. Among them was the Ukrainian American slavist, Professor Yuri Shevelov of Columbia University, whose interest in the Belarusian language went back more than two decades (his first work, *Problems of formation of Belarusian*, appeared in 1953). In 1975 he wrote an important article on distinguishing between Belarusian and Ukrainian 16th century written documents. Another frequent visitor was Shevelov's former student, Professor Paul Wexler of Tel-Aviv University, author of several works on Belarusian, among them *A Historical Phonology of the Belarusian Language* (1977). Among other vistors one can mention Professor Santé Gracciotti from the University of Rome; Emanuela Sgambati, also from Rome University, author of the work on the Belarusian version of the medieval story of Tristan and Isolde and its Italian original, which was found by the author in Venice; Father Jan Krajcar, professor of history at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, who wrote on the princes of Sluck and their efforts for Church Union in the 16th century Belarus; Professor Moshe Altbauer from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who was working on the publication of 16th century Jewish-Belarusian Biblical texts; Professor Paul Cubberley from the University of Melbourne; Professor Reginald De Bray from the University of Canberra, author of the fundamental work, "Guide to the Slavonic Languages"; Professor Frantishek Mare≠s of the University of Vienna, who made a study of the 15th century Belarusian translation of the Roman Mass; Ferdinand Neureiter of Salzburg, author of an anthology of Belarusian Literature in German translation; G. M. Meredith-Owen, professor of Turkish at the

University of Toronto who together with Father A. Nadson worked on the Belarusian Tatar manuscripts in Arabic script. The list could be extended.

However, the majority of visitors were Belarusians. Among them the most loyal was Anthony Adamovich (1909-1998), a well known Belarusian literary critic and historian. As a young man in Minsk in 1920s he was closely connected with the famous Belarusian literary group "Uzvyshsha". It was suppressed by the Communists in 1931, and its members, including Adamovich, were imprisoned or exiled. After the war Adamovich, a political refugee, settled permanently in New York. He took a keen interest in the Francis Skaryna Library, of which he was a major benefactor. He usually visited London at least once a year, and always stayed in "his" room in the library. Other vistors included Stanislau Stankievich, the editor of the Belarusian paper *Belarus* in New York; the poets Ryhor Krushyna and Masiej Siadniou from Germany, and the writer Kastus Akula from Canada, to mention only a few.

Sometimes Bishop Sipovich had the rare joy of greeting a childhood friend. Such was Victor Zhauniarovich, his schoolmate from Druia, and now a well established painter in Paris and an active member of the Belarusian community there. He came to London in spring 1979 and stayed for one week in Marian House. Some of his fine paintings adorn the conference room in St Peter's House.

Among visitors to Marian House and the Skaryna Library in 1970s, Belarusians from Soviet Belarus formed the smallest group. This was understandable. The travel of Soviet citizens abroad was restricted. In some rare cases a person was allowed to visit their relatives abroad, but was warned against any contacts with "Belarusian bourgeois nationalists" (in short "beburnatsy"). There were also conducted, – and well supervised – tours for certain groups of people, such as writers, artists etc. Despite all this there were some people who found a way to come and visit Marian House. They usually were very cautious and even were reluctant to sign the visitors' book. But all the same this was a contact with Belarus and a source of valuable information. Bishop Sipovich never missed a chance to ask them about the religious situation in Belarus.

Some people managed to evade the vigilance of their "guardian angels" and asked for the asylum in the West. One of these was Mikola Paulouski, a young talented Belarusian painter who in 1979 came with a group of Soviet artists to Paris. As he himself explained, he was not a political dissident, but simply felt suffocated by the ideological constraints imposed on the artist's work by the Communist rulers. Soon after his defection Paulouski got in touch with Father Nadson who invited him to London. Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on 20 February 1980: "The painter Mikola Paulouski came from Paris. Born in Druia in 1948. Orthodox. Says that the memory of Belarusian Marian Fathers is still alive among the people there. He himself knows the names of our Fathers Tsikota, Hermanovich, Smulka. Makes the impression of a man calm, concentrated, completely dedicated to his art". On 21 February at the Francis Skaryna Library Paulouski gave a talk on contemporary trends in Belarusian graphic art. There was also an exhibition of his own works, several of which were inspired by the poetry of the early 20th-century Belarusian poet Maksim Bahdanovich. Bishop Sipovich was particularily pleased to have first-hand information from Druia and many of his old acquaintances who were still alive.

Foreign travel from Poland, despite the Communist regime there, was easier than from the Soviet Union. After the Second World War a small part of Belarusian ethnic territory was left within the borders of the Polish Republic. It was the eastern part of the Bialystok (Bielastok) province, with some 250-300 thousand inhabitants.

There were also a number of Belarusians who suceeded in leaving Soviet Belarus soon after the war. They usually settled in central Poland or in the western territories which before the war belonged to Germany. For certain time they had to hide their ethnic identity, but soon began to come into the open. From the middle of 1950s Belarusians had their own schools, organisations (with headquarters in Bialystok and branches in other cities, some of them outside the Bialystok region, such as Warsaw or Gdansk, where there was a concentration of Belarusians). The Belarusian department of Warsaw University trained teachers for Belarusian schools. The weekly paper *Niva*, with the children supplement *Zorka*, appeared in Bialystok. Belarusian writers published their almanach *Belavezha* in addition to works of individual authors.

The only institution which consistently refused to recognise the existence of Belarusians was the Polish Catholic Church. There was nothing new in this. On 25 April 1939, Father Victor Shutovich, assistant priest in Kharoshch in Bialystok region, wrote to Father Chrysostom Tarasevitch in Chicago: "You have no idea about the conditions of our life here! Not a word can be said about Belarus; priests are not allowed to speak or write in Belarusian. This is a forbidden subject. That is how delicate the Belarusian problem has become!"

And yet, despite this pressure (or perhaps because of it) many well known Belarusian Catholics had come from the Bialystok region in the past, including Father Joseph (Athanasius) Reshats (1890-1958), former professor at the Vilna Seminary, and later benedictine monk of St Procopius Abbey at Lisle, U.S.A., author of *Short Catechism* and *History of Christian Apologetics* in Belarusian; Father Joseph Dashuta, one of the Belarusian Marian Fathers who were expelled from Druia in 1938; Dr Stanislau Hrynkievich who translated into Belarusian Thomas a Kempis's *On the Imitation of Christ.* Father Anthony Niemantsevich, the Exarch of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church, was born in St Petersburg, but his family came from Sakolka district in the Bialystok region.

Bialystok after 1945 was the centre of that part of the Vilna archdiocese which remained within the Polish republic. It became a separate diocese only in 1991. Before then it had a series of administrators, the first of whom was archbishop Romuald Jalbrzykowski who governed it until his death in 1955. In the changed circumstances after the Second World War one thing remained unchanged, namely his attitude towards Belarusians.

In 1971 Dominic Aniska (1888-1971) died in London. He was a native of Sakolka district, a pious Catholic, author of several articles and books on religious subjects. He had began writing in the Belarusian papers *Nasha niva* and *Belarus* before the First World War, and later became regular contributor to *Krynica* and *Chryscijanskaja dumka*. His grand niece came to London from Sakolka in 1972 and stayed for some time at St Cyril's House. She was surprised to hear Catholic priests speak Belarusian, and not Polish, but also relieved, because this meant that she could speak freely "as they do at home".

Belarusian life in Poland has thus become concentrated in the south-eastern part of Bialystok province which in its overhelming majority is Orthodox.

Closer contacts with Belarusians from Poland were established with the arrival in January 1979 of Prof. Alexander Barshcheuski, head of the Belarusian department of the University of Warsaw, a literary historian and a well known poet, writing under the pen-name of Ales Barski. Bishop Sipovich was in Rome at that time, and on his return on 2 February he wrote in his diary: "Soon (after arrival) I met Dr Alexander Barshcheuski. He has made a good impression on everybody and on me personally. He admires my energy". On Sunday 4 February Barshcheuski gave a talk

in the library on the life of Belarusians in Poland. He spoke about tcultural and intellectual activities, Belarusian writers, schools, the Belarusian Department at Warsaw University, which in that year had 56 students, some of them Poles. His talk aroused great interest among all present, whose number on that occasion was exceptionally large.

Other Belarusian visitors from Poland followed. Within one year the Francis Skaryna Library saw Dr Iurka Hieniiush, son of the great Belarusian poet Larysa Hieniiush and himself a writer; poets Victor Shved and Ian Chykvin; and arguably one of the most outstanding contemporary Belarusian writers, Sakrat Janovich. Thus a lively contact between London and Belarusians in Poland was established.

A special group of visitors from Poland were students who usually came West in summer on "working holidays". Many of them found their way to Marian House and the Francis Skaryna Library, and even stayed there for some time. Some of them were Catholics and strongly polonised. Bishop Sipovich always liked to talk with young people. It pained him to discover that many young Catholics did not know the basic truths of their faith, and some declared themselves to be nonbelivers. This was the first encounter with the real Poland, where many went to church as a political manifestation against the Communist regime. Bishop Sipovich did what he could, having long talks on religious subjects with them. For one young student, before she left, he wrote a special prayer, which, as he noted in his diary, was based on his talks with her, but could be used by other young people. It began thus: "Lord Jesus Christ, you said: ‘Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest (*Mt 11:28*)’. I come to you, although I don’t know you. I grew, matured, enjoying the benefits of your air, sun and many of your general bounties, but there was no one who could teach me your truth, no one introduced me to you. That is why I am afraid to look you in the face. Jesus Christ! Give me the courage and the chance to know you!"

Thus Bishop Sipovich remained first and foremost a priest. Obviously he had no sympathy or patience with Polish priests who, instead of teaching people basic truths of their faith in the language they understood best, insisted on maintaining the Polish character of the Church.

In May 1980 Bishop Sipovich received a letter (in Polish) from an old acquaintance from Druia, a certain Father (or Monsignor) Witold Pietkun who was then visiting Rome. Forty years earlier the Belarusian paper *Krynica* had described this priest as follows: "He was born in Ikazn in Braslau district in a Belarusian family. His parents even now speak no language except Belarusian. He studied at the Marian High School in Druia and considered himself then a Belarusian. After finishing the sixth form of the Marian High School, he went on to Dzisna, and then to Vilna Priest Seminary. At the seminary, and after its completion, he became known as a fanatical Polish nationalist. He rejoiced when Bocianski expelled the Belarusians and Lithuanians, and only regretted that the Polish authorities had not done it sooner. In Pietkun’s view the Lithuanian and Belarusian territories are Polish, and in the future they will form part of Poland from sea to sea (i.e. from the Baltic to Black sea – *A.N.*)" (*Krynica*, No.27, Vilna , 5 April 1940). After the war Pietkun settled in Bialystok where he became a professor in the local seminary. To the letter was attached Pietkun’s report of his visit to Minsk, written 2 March 1980, in which, among other things he wrote: "In Minsk more often than not one hears spoken Russian and popular Belarusian (Mow≥... ludow≤ bialorusk≤)... the young people don’t speak Polish, but generally understand it... Nontheless all the divine services near the church are celebrated exclusively in Polish". There was also some vague talk about the common cultural values of the Bialystok and Vilna regions. Bishop

Sipovich took his time over answering this letter. Finally he wrote on 10 August 1980 in Belarusian. Here are a few extracts: "Thank you very much for your short note of 29.4.80 from Rome and for the enclosures. I hope you have not yet forgotten the Belarusian language, and that is why I write in Belarusian. The religious situation in Belarus is very difficult. But whose fault is it? It is well-known fact that the young people there no longer speak Polish, but the priests continue to pray in Polish, and even insist on hearing confessions in that foreign tongue. I known that now in Poland there is a Belarusian paper *Niva*, Belarusian books are being published, there are well-known Belarusian writers – Sakrat Janovich, Ales Barski, Pauluchuk and others... Why then in the Drohiczyn and Bialystok seminaries the Belarusian language is not taught?... I know that from time to time "missionaries" from Poland are being sent to Belarus, but they think that they do a great thing if they bring to some pious old woman a prayer book in Polish or a rosary. However, I have never heard of any Polish priest who showed the slightest wish to learn history of the Belarusian Church, Belarusian literature, language... You write about the common traits of the Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian culture in the Harodnia and Vilna regions. Before talking about Belarusian culture, it is necessary to learn about Belarus. Unfortunately, your priests show no interest whatsoever..."

Pietkun answered in a letter, dated Christmas 1980/81. In it he wrote: "Thank you from all my heart for this letter and for writing it in Belarusian dialect (sic! – *A.N.*). It appears that I did not forget it all after so many years, although it sounds somewhat different from how it was spoken many years ago in the Braslau district... Please excuse me, but the ethnic problems in the region where the Western and Eastern Europe meet belong in our days to anachronisms (are completely out dated). We are sent with the Gospel message to all people, and today Our Lord has sent various peoples to us. Here is a historical chance to fulfill the salvific mission, on condition that we leave ethnic and cultural problems to the lay communities, who are better qualified". In other words, let the lay people discuss the "Belarusian dialect", while the priests would continue to spread among Belarusians the message of salvation in Polish.

It was obvious that any further correspondence was useless. In any case Father Pietkun died in April 1981, and Bishop Sipovich followed him five months later. Whether they have found a common language in heaven, must for the moment remain a secret.

## 21. Writer and Scholar

As has been said before, Bishop Sipovich was a man of considerable intelligence, but not an intellectual, in the sense that problems of a speculative nature were of no interest to him. This is reflected in his writings. If one overlooks his youthful efforts such as correspondence from Rome to *Chryscijanskaja dumka* and *Krynica* in 1939-40, his serious writing began with his article in the December 1947 issue of *Bozhym shliakham,* entitled "The Bases of Belarusian Patriotism"[52]. This was a piece of competent but not very inspired writing, reminiscent of a student essay on a set subject. Nevertheless it is important as it shows the direction in which the author's interests lay, namely the practical implications of our faith. His subsequent articles confirm this. Here are a few titles: "The times of Christ and ours"[53], "God and the United Nations"[54], a series of four articles under the general name "Religious aberrations of our intelligentsia (i.e. educated class – *A.N.*)"[55] and others. Even the article "1054-1954"[56], dealing with the history of and reasons for the Great Schism between Rome and Constantinople, ends with practical conclusions: "Today, thank God, we can feel on all sides an awareness of the need for a united Christian front. Apart from purely religious reasons, which urge people to strive to reestablish unity, there is also a practical, very timely, reason. Godless communism is the enemy of all religions, especially Christianity; it would be much easier to resist this enemy if we were united in spirit, truth and action". The motif of unity is very much present in Bishop Sipovich's later writings, whether they were reports from the Vatican Council (in which he proved himself a talented journalist), his pastoral letters and sermons, as for example the sermon preached at Westminster Cathedral on 19 January 1965 on the occasion of the Octave of Prayers for Christian Unity, "That all may be one"[57], the basis of which was the Vatican II Council's Decree on Ecumenism. Bishop Sipovich was a good preacher, speaking in a simple and lively manner, and establishing a good contact with his listeners from the first word. Some of these qualities are lost in print, but the reader can still feel the author's warm personality and the intense sincerity of his convictions.

At the Pontifical Oriental Institute Bishop Sipovich specialised in Church history. On 19 December 1946 he defended his doctoral thesis entitled *Metropolita Jason J. Smogorzevski, 1780-1788*. The subject of the thesis was the last period in the life and work of Jason Smogorzewski (1715-1788) who, after 18 years as archbishop of Polatsak, was elected in 1780 to the Greek Catholic (Uniate) metropolitan see of Kiev at a time when the territory of this ancient metropolitan province was partitioned between three political powers: Russia, Austria and what remained of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The thesis received favourable reports from the examiners, but has remained unpublished to the present day, mainly because it was written in Latin, and no one has volunteered to translate it (over 250 typewritten

---

[52] C. Sipovich, "Asnovy bielaruskaha patryiatyzmu", *Bozhym shliakham*, No.3, Paris, 1947, pp.4-6

[53] C. Sipovich, "Chasy Khrysta i nashy", *Bozhyym shliakham*, Paris, 1948, Nos. 8(11), pp.7-9; 11--12(14-15), pp.4-7

[54] C. S., "Boh i Ab'ednanyia Natsyi", *Bozhym shliakham*, No11-12 (26-27), Paris, 1949, pp.3-4

[55] C. Sipovich, "Relihiinyia kryvuli nashai intelihiencyi", *Bozhym shliakham*, Nos.46, 47, 48, Paris, 1952-53

[56] C. Sipovich, "1054-1954", *Bozhym shliakham*, No.61, Paris, 1954, pp.1-3

[57] Belarusian text: C. Sipovich, "Kab usie byli adno", *Bozhym shliakham*, No. 2(89), London, 1965, pp.2-4

pages) into Belarusian or any other modern language. In 1951 Sipovich himself published in four consecutive issues of *Bozhym shliakham* an article entitled "The Metropolitan province of Kiev in the second half of the 18th century"[58]. This was based on the first chapter of his thesis, but even the author himself found the work of translating it too daunting and time-consuming, so he stopped there. This is a pity, for, apart from its intrinsic value, the work deals with a little studied period in the history of the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus. Incidentally, in 1965 there appeared in Rome in the Series "Roman Documents of the Catholic Church in the lands of Ukraine and Belarus" a volume entitled *Letters of Jason Junosza Smogorzewski, Catholic Metropolitan of Kiev (1780-1788)*[59] under the editorship of the Ukrainian Basilian Father Athanasius Velykij (general editor of the series) and Bishop Sipovich.

On 17 March 1968 Bishop Sipovich gave a lecture at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome entitled "Doctor Francis Skaryna and His Biblical Work". The lecture was arranged to mark the 450 years of Belarusian printing by Francis Skaryna and his work on the translation of biblical texts. In fact the anniversary was on the previous year, because the first book by Francis Skaryna, The Psalter, appeared on 6 August 1517. As Bishop Sipovich noted in his diary, the Institute authorities were afraid that no one would come to the lecture. In fact it proved to be a success: the auditorium was full, and the audience included cardinals Eugene Tisserant (who came despite his age) and Joseph Slipyi, as well as the full professorial staff of the Oriental Institute. Father Albert Ammann, Bishop Sipovich's old professor of the Church history in the Slavonic lands, who had earlier been dismissive about the importance of Francis Skaryna and his work, was also present. On 9 April he came to see Bishop Sipovich and asked him whether he could have the text of the lecture for publication. The Bishop had to disappoint him by saying that he already promised it for the journal *Unitas*[60]. He wrote in his diary: "In my lecture I criticised Father Ammann severely, but this did not affect our good relations".

After his return to London in 1969 Bishop Sipovich wrote two important articles, both written in English and published in *The Journal of Byelorussian Studies*.. They are "The Diocese of Minsk, its Origin, Extent and Hierarchy" (Vol.II, No.2, London 1970, pp.177-191) and "The Language Problem in the Catholic Church in Byelorussia from 1832 to the First World War" (Vol.III, No.1, London 1973, pp.3-40). The choice of subjects was significant, because it had direct relevance to the problems in which Bishop Sipovich was involved. The first article traces the history of the diocese of Minsk, capital of Belarus, since its establishment in the late 18th century, and shows that it had never been abolished. This fact could be a strong argument in favour of appointing an administrator for the Catholic Church in Belarus rather than make her dependent on Warsaw or Bialystok. The second article shows that the problem of the Belarusian language in the Catholic Church in Belarus has a long history and is not an invention of a few "fanatics" like Sipovich or Charniauski.

Bishop Sipovich was very excited by the acquisition on 27 June 1972 of the manuscript of the Pontifical Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom of 1652, in

---

58 C. Sipovich, "Kiieuskaia mitrapoliia u druhoi palovie XVIII stah.", *Bozhym shliakham*, Nos. 2(41) - 5(44), Paris, 1951

59 *Epistolae Jasonis Junosza Smogorzewski, Metropolitae Kioviensis Catholici (1780-1788).* Collegerunt P. Athanasius G. Welykij, Exc. D. Ceslaus Sipovic. Romae 1965, 455 pp. (Documenta Romana Ecclesiae Catholicae in Terris Ucrainae et Belarussiae)

60 Ceslao Sipovic, "Il dottor Francesco Skaryna e la sua opera biblica", *Unitas*, Year XXIII, Rome, April-June 1968, pp.126-138

Church Slavonic (Belarusian redaction) with parallel Latin translation. He became also interested in the person of Bishop Theodore Skuminovich, Suffragan of Vilna for Belarus, who presented the manuscript to the Church of SS Sergius and Bacchus in Rome (which then belonged to the Belarusian Basilian Fathers) and was probably its author. He began studying it, comparing the text with the 16-18 th century liturgical texts, published in Belarus, Ukraine and Moscow. He also collected a great amount of hitherto unknown material about Theodore Skuminovich (c.1610-1668), a scion of an old Belarusian noble family, who was born and studied in Vilna, then continued his studies in Cracow and Louvain (Leuven), became an Orthodox priest, in 1643 joined the Catholic Church and on 29 September 1652 was consecrated bishop at the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. It took Bishop Sipovich 6 years of work and research. Finally on 15 December 1978 he wrote in his diary: "Today the printers delivered 412 copies of my book, 'The Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom... Nobody is an impartial judge of his work, or of his child. And for the author every book is his child... I thank God who gave me time and strength to finish this book! I leave the judgement about its value to others, and can also repeat the well known saying: 'Feci quod potui, potentes faciant meliora (I did what I could, let those who can do better)'". The book is entitled *The Pontifical Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. A Manuscript of the 17th century in the Slavonic text and Latin translation*. It was published by the Francis Skaryna Library. The book consists of facsimile reproduction of the entire manuscript, followed by the life of Theodore Skuminovich based mainly on hitherto unpublished documents; and what Bishop Sipovich modestly called "Explanatory liturgical notes" but which is in fact a thorough comparative study of liturgical usage in Belarus, Ukraine and Muscovy in the 16-18th centuries. Altogether it is a beautifully produced volume and an impressive work of scholarship, a serious contribution to the Belarusian church history. It is dedicated "to the Apostles and Martyrs for Church Unity in Byelorussia".

Bishop Sipovich always wanted to write the history of the Druia Marian Fathers, and collected materials for years, trying to obtain original documents wherever possible or making photocopies in the Marian archives in Rome. However, he never got round to actually writing it. Bishop Sipovich had spent the best years of his life at Druia, first as a student in high school, then a candidate, novice and professed member of the Marian community, and was forced to leave the place in dramatic circumstances. He was deeply attached to Druia and tended to idealise everything connected with the place. His could have been an interesting personal, often emotional, account of events and people rather than an impartial history.

This conclusion can be arrived at on the basis of Sipovich's lives of Andrew Tsikota (1891-1952) and Fabian Abrantovich (1884-1946). Both these priests were no doubt remarkable men, both died in Soviet prisons, where, according to witnesses, they comported themselves with dignity, having maintained their unshakeable faith to the end. This imposes on their biographer the obligation to treat the subject with sensitivity and respect, but does not excuse him from being impartial.

Bishop Sipovich's life of Father Andrew Tsikota has remained unpublished. On the other hand his life of Father Abrantovich appeared in the 1957 issue of *Bozhym shliakham*.[61] It begins: "Father archimandrite Fabian Abrantovich is a great son of Belarusian people. His name is written with gold letters also in the history of the Catholic Church, and the Belarusian church in particular, for which he gave all his

---

[61] Sipovich C., "Aitsets Arkhimandryt Fabian Abrantovich", *Bozhym shliakham*, Nos 76-81, Paris 1957, pp.9-20

talents and in the end – his life". The reader, after having read the whole article, may be excused for feeling let down and asking himself why Abrantovich deserved such high praise. In fact this talented and dedicated priest played a rather modest role in Belarusian religious and national life. As has been said before, Belarusians expected much from him, but their expectations remained unfulfilled.

Sipovich entered the Marian "juniorate" in November 1928, after Abrantovich had left for Harbin. It is therefore highly unlikely that they knew each other at that time. On the other hand Sipovich knew Tsikota, who was superior at Druia until 1933. However, because of the difference of age and position both priests were for him distant figures, and in his attitude towards them there was an element of hero worship. There was a different relationship between him and Father Joseph Hermanovich, his favourite teacher in Druia who taught him to love Belarus, and the head of the house of studies in Vilna. In London, where Father Hermanovich came in 1960, the roles were reversed, and his former pupil became his superior. But, as Father Joseph liked to repeat with a twinkle in his eyes, he had no one to blame for this except himself... There were three articles by the Bishop on Father Hermanovich, two on the occasion of the latter's golden priestly jubilee[62], and the obituary article[63]. All three are a warm tribute to a beloved teacher and friend, and a great man and Belarusian. Bishop Sipovich paid an equally generous tribute to his another close friend, Father Leo Haroshka, with whom he had worked for over thirty years. The whole issue of *Bozhym shliakham* (No.149, 1978, 48 pp.), entirely written and edited by Bishop Sipovich, was dedicated to the life and work of Father Haroshka.

There are many other written tributes by Bishop Sipovich to his friends living and dead, showing him to be a loyal friend and generous man, always ready to acknowledge the good in others.

62 Ia. Vuchan, "Vintsuk Advazhny", *Konadni*, No.7, New York – Munchen, 1963. pp.89-95; Vuchan Vintsuka Advazhnaha, "Aitsets Iazep Hermanovivch – zhytstsio i tvorchasts", *Bozhym shliakham*, No.82, London 1964, pp. 9-12

63 C. Sipovich, "Sviatoi pamiatsi Aitsets Iazep Hermanovich", *Bozhym shliakham*. No.150, London 1979, pp.25-32

## 22. The Setting of the Sun

Bishop Sipovich wrote in his diary on 8 October 1979: "Not feeling very well, I went to see Doctor Jordan... He sent me to the hospital for an X-ray. I took a taxi to hospital, but decided to walk back from the hospital. I reached Marian House with great difficulty. Deathly weakness, nausea. I thought I would die. The heart. An ambulance was called, but, thinking that I might die on the way, I refused to go. Doctor Nurse came, diagnosed an infarct and ordered 5-6 weeks' rest. I prayed much to the Apostle Peter".

The Bishop's state of health had been giving cause for concern for some time, but this was the first major crisis. As time progressed such incidents became more frequent. One of them happened on Sunday 16 March 1980 in Rome: "I slept well, but in the chapel I could hardly finish celebrating the Liturgy of Saint Basil. Weakness, dizziness, heart pounding, legs giving way. Several times I had to sit down and read the prayers sitting". In London he often felt too weak in the morning to get up to celebrate the Liturgy. But all this was known only to those who were nearest to him.

Obviously the time for round-the-world travels was over, but he still insisted on going to Rome to see to Belarusian church affairs. In autumn 1980 the Bishop visited Paris where on 28 September he celebrated Liturgy for Belarusians who came from all over France, Belgium and Spain. This was to be his last major pastoral engagement outside London, and he found it very exhausting.

Towards the end of 1980 Bishop Sipovich was invited to give a series of lectures on the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church at the London branch of the St Clement Ukrainian University, which was founded by Cardinal Joseph Slipyi. The first lecture took place on 11 December. On 28 January Cardinal Slipyi wrote a letter of thanks to Bishop Sipovich, in which he said: "I express my sincere gratitude for this sign of your cooperation and brotherly understanding of our Church and Nation. The fate of the Belarusian People is more tragic than ours, and their sufferings and the serious danger to their existence have never been properly understood (by the outside world – *A.N.*). In history we, the Ukrainians, had so much in common with the Belarusian people. In my public interventions on various occasions I have remembered Your People and their Church, and shall do it in the future". Thus the rift which appeared in 1972 between the two prelates because of the difference of views on the relations between the Belarusian Church and the Ukrainian Patriarchate, was healed at last. More lectures were planned for 1981, but had to be cancelled because of the deterioration of the Bishop's health.

The last years of the Bishop's life were clouded by a hate campaign, unleashed against him by someone whom he considered to be a close friend. His name was Joseph Pazniak. He was a Catholic Belarusian. Sipovich had known him since 1948, and helped to obtain for him a place at Louvain University where he failed in his studies. In 1954 Pazniak returned to London and married an English Catholic girl. It was Father Sipovich who officiated at their marriage. The couple and he became close friends. In the late 1950s the Pazniaks emigrated to the United States. They first settled in New York, but in 1972, after Joseph took early retirement for health reasons, moved to Florida. Bishop Sipovich tried not to miss visiting them whenever he was in the United States, although it was not always easy or convenient. There is a note in the file with their correspondence, in which he wrote: "I did not always want to visit them because I was busy, but I did it at their insistence and invitations". The couple had no children, and when they retired to Florida in 1972,

Joseph was about 50 years old, with plenty of free time on his hands and nothing to do. The Bishop advised him, for his own sake, to find some interest or occupation. In 1978 Pazniak's attitude towards Bishop Sipovich suddenly changed. Initially it seemed to be wounded pride: Pazniak accused the Bishop of showing no appreciation for his goodness and generosity. As time progressed, the accusations became more strident and irrational. In one of his letters he wrote: "You have surpassed the Germans and the Bolsheviks". He also began writing letters against the Bishop to all Belarusians whose addresses he had, and to the church authorities. Most people knew Bishop Sipovich too well to believe the accusations. For instance the Orthodox Bishop Mikalay (Matsukievich) wrote to Bishop Sipovich, of 31 July 1980: "Today I received a letter from Joseph Pazniak. In the end of his letter he writes: 'I ask your advice where to find help'... Please write to me a few words about Mr Pazniak, so that I may know about him. I am afraid to get involved in some sort of trouble, because there are many provocateurs in our days". The whole affair, which lasted three years, brought much suffering and pain to Bishop Sipovich and certainly did not help his already weak health. But he always referred to Pazniaks as "my friends" and refrained from saying anything bad about them. Some sort of reconciliation took place in 1981, shortly before Bishop's death. The sudden change of attitude on the part of Pazniaks and the intensity of their hate campaign escapes any rational explanation. Some people considered it to be Communist-inspired, because its beginning coincided with the visit of Pazniak's brother from the Soviet Belarus. Bishop Sipovich was attacked several times in the Communist press with a view to discrediting him in the eyes of Belarusians.

In 1981 the Belarusians in London intended to mark solemnly the tenth anniversary of the Francis Skaryna Library. The celebration was planned for the weekend of 16-17 May, the nearest to the original date of the opening of the library ten years before, which took place on Saturday 15 May. Before that, on 21 April the Bishop planned to go to Rome for a forthnight to take part in the General Chapter of the Marian Congregation.

On 19 March Father Nadson went to Paris where he stayed till 31 March. On his return to London he learned that Bishop Sipovich had been taken on Saturday 28 March to hospital for prostate operation. The Bishop was in considerable pain, but still optimistic, hoping to be out before Easter. Unfortunately he had to undergo three operations, on 3, 16 and 24 April, the first two being unsuccessful. The day before his last operation he was very weak and received the Sacrament of the Sick. On the day of the operation he made the following entry in his diary: "All my sufferings I offer for the Catholic Church, and especially that God may call more good priests from among Belarusians".

The Easter of that year fell on 19 April, and with Bishop Sipovich still in hospital, it was obvious that the library celebration would have to be postponed. It was also in hospital that he heard the news of the death on Holy Saturday, 18 April of Bishop Boleslaus Sloskans at the age of 88.

Bishop Sipovich left hospital on 8 May. He was very weak and exhausted, yet insisted on celebrating the Liturgy on the following morning, but could not finish it, and a doctor had to be called. However as the time passed he seemed to improve and regain his former energy. He even wanted to go to Rome, but the attempt at the Pope's life on 13 May put an end to this plan. He decided to visit Rome in the autumn soon after the celebration of the library anniversary which was fixed for Sunday 4 October.

On Sunday 5 July Bishop Sipovich presided at the concelebrated Mass at the Farm Street Jesuit church in central London in honour of Saints Cyril and Methodius, Apostles of the Slavs, whom the Holy Father proclaimed patrons of Europe jointly with Saint Benedict. In his homily he said that before engaging in the work for Christian unity it is necessary to examine one's conscience and get rid of prejudices which may be obstacles in this work.

On 6-9 August the 31st annual international Congress "Kirche in Not (The Church in Need)" was held at Koenigstein near Frankfurt. Although Bishop Sipovich was not sure of his strength, he decided to take part in it. He even prepared in German a paper on the state of the Church in Belarus. Copies of the text of his paper were distributed among the participants. On Sunday 9 August, at the conclusion of the Congress, there was a solemn Pontifical Liturgy. On previous occasions the chief celebrant had usually been the Ukrainian Bishop Platon Kornyliak from Munich. On this particular occasion it was Bishop Sipovich.

The Bishop returned from Koenigstein very tired, but there was no time to rest: 4 October was not far away. There were unexpected and serious drawbacks. Early in September Mr Jan Michaluk had a stroke. Bishop Sipovich felt it very deeply because of the close friendship which existed between the two men, and also because, as chairman of the Association of Belarusians, Mr Michaluk was scheduled to play an important part during the library anniversary celebration. Fortunately the stroke was not severe, and after some three weeks he recovered sufficiently to take part in the forthcoming event.

On Sunday 27 September there was the "Pilgrimage of Crosses" for the persecuted Church to Walsingham, the most famous English Shrine of the Mother of God. Fifteen ethnic groups of refugees from the Communist-dominated countries took part. It fell to Bishop Sipovich, who came with a group of Catholics and Orthodox Belarusians, to lead the procession of 1200 pilgrims from the centre of the town (the "Friday Market") along the Holy Mile to the Slipper Chapel, Walsingham's Catholic shrine (there are also Orthodox and Anglican shrines), where the Holy Mass was celebrated. He said on this occasion: "We are expressing our solidarity with persecuted Christians of every nation and bringing our sorrows to Our Lady who is the Mother of us all". It was a very tiring day, but the Bishop came back feeling happy and at peace.

Sunday 4 October turned out to be a beautiful autumn day, sunny and warm. Bishop Sipovich was up very early, saying his prayers in the chapel and getting ready for the celebration of Divine Liturgy. The people began to arrive at about 10 a.m. The chapel had rarely seen such gathering of people. The Belarusians came from all parts of Great Britain, and also from the United States, Canada, France, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Poland. There were British guests, many from the academic world, others from the Society of St John Chrysostom, and just friends. There were also representatives of the Ukrainians, Czechs, Slovaks, Poles and many other national groups.

The Liturgy started at 10.30 a.m. The choir under direction of Guy Picarda sang exceptionally well. After the Gospel the Bishop spoke in Belarusian and in English. His main theme being the right of every nation to develop freely the spiritual gifts given to it by God, and thus achieve its own fulfilment within its own tradition.

After the Liturgy there was a tour of the library and then a reception. Bishop Sipovich greeted the guests and thanked all those who had made possible the success of the library over the ten years of its existence. Those turned out to be his last words.

When he finished and sat down to listen to others' speeches, he suddenly slumped and lost consciousness. An ambulance was called, and the Bishop was taken to Barnet General Hospital, where shortly after being admitted he died of a massive coronary thrombosis. Father Nadson was with him and gave him absolution.

Such were the dramatic circumstances the end of Bishop Sipovich's life on this earth in the middle of what had to be one of his greatest triumphs. Although, on reflection, one could see that this was a beautiful death: he died at peace with his God, surrounded by friends, without prolonged suffering and having seen the results of his efforts. But this reflection came later... At the moment when it all happened there were the feelings of shock, great loss and sorrow that prevailed among all present. These feelings were shared by all who knew Bishop Sipovich throughout the world as soon as the news reached them.

The funeral of Bishop Sipovich took place on Tuesday 13 October in the local parish church of Saint Alban, because the chapel at Marian House was far too small to accommodate the large number of the faithful who came to pay their last respects. The principal celebrant was Archimandrite Uladzimir Tarasevitch who flew over specially from Chicago, together with Father Nadson and four other priests. Presiding at the Liturgy were bishop Patrick Casey of Brentwood representing the English Hierarchy, and Philip Harvey, auxiliary bishop of Westminster, representing Cardinal Basil Hume. There were also many Roman rite clergy, including several Marians. The Belarusiamn Orthodox Archpriest Eugene Smarshchok came specially from Belgium. With him were also Fathers John Ababurka from Manchester and John Piakarski from Stevenage near London. The homily after the Gospel was preached by Bishop Casey. At the end of the Liturgy Father Nadson spoke in Belarusian and Archimandrite Tarasevitch in English. The final Commendation and Farewell were performed in both rites, first by Bishop Casey and the Roman rite clergy, and then by Archimandrite Tarasevitch and Byzantine rite Catholic and Orthodox priests. Then to the accompaniment of the chant "Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal one, have mercy on us", the mortal remains of Bishop Sipovich were escorted from the church and taken for burial at Saint Pancras Cemetery. After the short burial service, Jan Michaluk, chairman of the Association of Belarusians in Great Britain and Bishop Sipovich's close friend, made a brief eulogy. Then all Belarusians sang the religious hymn "Mahutny Bozha (O, God Almighty)"; it was followed by the Latin hymn in honour of the Mother of God, "Salve Regina", which was sung by the Roman rite priests and faithful present. Bishop Sipovich was laid to rest beside the graves of Fathers Haroshka, Padziava and Hermanovich.

=================

Bishop Sipovich died in the 67th year of his life, 43 of which had been spent outside his native Belarus. Humanly speaking he could have had at least another ten or fifteen years of useful life. But God had other plans for him. Our life is such that, as Archimandrite Tarasevitch aptly put it, "we cannot promise ourselves not only tomorrow but even the rest of the present day".[64]

In the life of Ceslaus Sipovich there had been a number of what, for the lack of a better word, may be called coincidences. As a young Roman Catholic clerical student and a member of the Belarusian Marian community, he was no doubt looking forward to being a priest in his native country and among his own people. The

---

[64] *The Harbinger*, No. 41, Chicago, 11 October 1981

expulsion of the Belarusian Marian Fathers from Druia put an end to these expectations. Four weeks after the expulsion he accepted the offer of the Superior General, Father Tsikota, to continue his theological studies in Rome on condition that he changed to the Byzantine rite and promised to work later among Russians in Harbin. This sudden decision must have taken many by surprise, because before that moment there is no record of Sipovich showing any particular interest in Eastern Christianity or the "conversion" of Russia. It proved to be the turning point of his life. During the whole period of the Second World War Sipovich remained in Rome and continued his studies undisturbed. The same war, and the post-war political situation prevented him from joining other Belarusian Marian Fathers in Harbin. This did not seem to make Sipovich very sad. In fact, despite his loud protestations that he would fly there like a bird, he was in no particular hurry to go. During his years in Rome Sipovich had ample opportunity to observe the unenviable situation of Belarusians in the Church. Soon after the cessation of hostilities he met Belarusian priests and refugees. These meetings, especially with Father Haroshka, determined the future direction of his life and work, from which there was no turning back.

Bishop Sipovich was a man of vision and courage. Once an idea took hold of him, he was not deterred by difficulties in the way of its realisation. He had the qualities of a great statesman or a succesful businesman, and he could easily have become one of them, if he were not a priest. But he was a priest first and foremost, and the only business he was interested in was God's business: spreading the message of Salvation and gaining the souls of men for God. Deeply attached to the Catholic Church and secure in his religious convictions, he yearned for the moment when all Christians would be again united. But he had no patience with the crude and aggressive proselytism which may be regarded as the religious equivalent of headhunting. Bishop Sipovich was an ecumenist long before "ecumenism" became a household word in the Catholic Church. His ecumenism was based on the notion of the universal value of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, for which reason everyone, irrespective of his or her religious convictions, was a potential son or daughter of God. That was why he treated everyone with equal friendliness and respect.

Bishop Sipovich was a Belarusian. Despite the fact that he spent two thirds of his life far from Belarus, his love of his native country and people never diminished. There is nothing reprehensible in loving one's own people and wishing it to be free and prosperous, provided it is not at the expense of other peoples. In the case of Belarus there had existed for too long a situation in which anyone who insisted on speaking his or her native tongue was accused of being a nationalist by those who attempted, often by force, to impose their language and culture on Belarusians. This offended Bishop Sipovich's sense of justice. What pained him most was to see priests among the chief offenders. He understood that banning people's native tongue from church use was a sure way of keeping those people from the Church. Thus the Bishop's strong uncompromising stand on the Belarusian national issue, in particular as regards the language, was not crude nationalism: it was the affirmation of the right of Belarusians to have their place in God's family of nations.

Bishop Sipovich was an intensely loyal person. For him friendship meant friendship for life. Several times he was hurt by those who betrayed his trust in them, but he never ceased to consider them his friends.

Loyalty to the Marian Congregation made Bishop Sipovich make one mistake which, given the circumstances, was bound to end in failure. This was the idea of the "New Druia" at Marian House in London, with Belarusian Marian Fathers permanently established there and in charge of the Belarusian Catholic Mission. Bishop Sipovich refused to the end to entertain the idea that one day there might be no Belarusian Marians left at Marian House. But that was exactly what happened. In January 1982 the Oriental Congregation appointed the present writer Rector of the Belarusian Catholic Mission of the Byzantine rite in England and charged him to help "to settle all questions relating to the succession of the deceased, first of all the titles of ownership of various houses". It took him nearly two years to prepare the report. The Marian Fathers did not like it at all and refused to discuss its merits. Instead, they signed an "agreement" with Sipovich's successor, Bishop Uladzimir Tarasevitch, according to which they leased Marian House to him on an annual basis (later increased to three years). The Mission was thus put in an impossible situation. The rector, after having resisted the initial temptation to resign, suggested what seemed to him an equitable solution, namely that the Marian Fathers should sell the house to the Mission for a nominal fee, thereby satisfying the requirements of honour and justice. His suggestion remained without answer. In 1991 Belarus became independent. For the Marian Fathers who tried to extend their activities there, the Marian House affair could become a cause of serious embarassement. In 1999 they handed the property over as a gift, at no cost to themselves, to the Oriental Congregation, without previously consulting, or at least officially informing, the rector of the Belarusian Mission.

Knowing how Bishop Sipovich felt about Druia and the Marian Congregation, his mistake was almost inevitable. It was doubtless a case of misplaced trust. As to the Marian Congregation, their behaviour was sadly typical of many ecclesiastical institutions, defending their narrow caste interests, remaining blind to the merits of the matter and its wider implications, in particular the effect on the faithful, whom they treated with total disregard. It is as if the Vatican II Council with its Constitution on the Church and Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity had never happened.

Putting aside the manner in which Marian House was acquired, the idea of establishing a strong Belarusian religious centre abroad was certainly a sound one. There was nothing wrong with this centre being run by Marian Fathers, provided there was a sufficient number of new vocations to secure its future. Unfortunately by 1969 out of four members of the Marian Congregation at Marian House the youngest was 55 years old. The attempts to bring over a few surviving elderly priests from Poland, even if they had been successful, were not a solution. It was time to think not about the Belarusian Marian fundation, but about the future of pastoral work among Belarusians.

The problem of priestly vocations in the Belarusian diaspora was an acute one. Belarusian priests did their best to care for the scattered Catholic families and provide religious education for young people. But they were few and working in isolation from each other. A general plan of action and regular reunions would have been a great help. However, nothing happened for over ten years. After the reunion of 1960 which resulted in the appointment of a Belarusian bishop, the next important meeting took place only in 1972 (the reunions of 1961 and 1962 were little more than informal meetings). One reason for this was no doubt the fact that Bishop Sipovich was the Superior General of the Marian Congregation between 1963 and 1969 – a post which required his full-time attention. There was a feeling among the non-Marian priests that the first and only Belarusian Catholic bishop had been

"kidnapped" by the Marians. Thirty years earlier, in 1933, the Superior of the Belarusian Marian Community in Druia, Father Andrew Tsikota, was elected Superior General of the Marian Congregation. He was replaced in Druia by a Pole...

Bishop Sipovich's dedication to the cause of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church, as well as his considerable achievements, speak for themselves. It was largely thanks to his efforts that Belarusians were no longer considered as a mere "apt instrument for the conversion of Russia", but as a people in their own right, whose spiritual needs and national aspirations must be taken seriously. It was also he who did much to dispel the myth that the only Catholics in Belarus were Poles. His failure to establish a strong basis for the further development of the Belarusian Greek Catholic Church was not so much his fault, as the result of the difficult situation within the Belarusian diaspora. Nonetheless one cannot help feeling that he could have done more if he had not been so closely involved in the affairs of the Marian Fathers. On becoming bishops, members of religious congregations are usually exempt from all duties within their congregation. It is a pity that this wise rule was not observed in the case of Bishop Sipovich.

Ceslaus Sipovich was appointed bishop by Pope John XXIII, who in less than five years transformed the Catholic Church, making her face the modern world. Belarusians had been for too long ignored as a nation by the world at large and, unfortunately, by the Church. For many of them the appointment of a Belarusian bishop for Belarusians was an act of justice long overdue. For Ceslaus Sipovich it was first of all a sense of responsibility. As the first and only Belarusian Catholic bishop he felt responsible for all Belarusian Catholics irrespective of their rite, whether in or outside Belarus. As the first Belarusian Greek Catholic bishop in over 120 years he considered it his duty to prepare the ground for the restoration of the Greek Catholic Church in Belarus. In particular he was conscious of the need to break down the age-long prejudices and misunderstandings, fed by hostile propaganda, between the Greek Catholics on one side, and the Roman Catholics and Orthodox on the other, and try to establish with them relations based on mutual trust and respect. Last but not least, because of his position, he felt it to be his duty to act as the "ambassador" of Belarus and her people in the Church and the world. There were mistakes and failures, often painful. This was to be expected, because in many cases he was blazing a new trail in an unknown territory, without the benefit of precedent or previous experience. He accepted his failures with humility, but was not discouraged by them, or diverted from his purpose. Indifferent to personal honours or praise, he never failed to give thanks to God, whom he loved more than everything, to his Blessed Mother, and to Saint Peter, for whom he had particular devotion and who, according to him, had never let him down. If one were asked to define briefly the essence of Bishop Sipovich's life, one could not do it better than in the words of Saint Paul: "By God's grace I am what I am, nor has his grace been given to me in vain" (*1 Cor 15: 10*).